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THE EARL'S CEDARS.

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THE EARL'S CEDARS.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

"SMUGGLERS AND FORESTERS," "FABIAN'S TOWER," "LEWELL
PASTURES," AND "THE WRECKERS."

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THE EARL'S CEDARS.

CHAPTER I.

SALCOMBE did not inquire into my motives when I asked him if he would take me with him in the cutter as far as the Islands,—so a rocky group was called which lay at some distance from the coast, lashed by the surges of the North Sea. On the largest of these, poor young Dunleary had built for himself a fishing-lodge. From the mainland, when the sun was declining, the eye caught a bright gleam shining on the signal-post at the station ; for the coast—or, as they are called in that part of Ireland—the water-guard, had an establishment there, under the direction of a chief boatman.

My friend had been very actively employed all the winter, and had proved more successful than usual. He had taken several

prizes, and had not got into a single scrape or quarrel. Temple and he were still excellent friends, and, for a whole half-year, the Inspecting Commander had found no fault with his proceedings. I congratulated his pretty wife very sincerely on the improvement she had wrought in him.

Truly, it was a wild cruise, and a short one, that we made of it. The Shamrock flew like a bird over the chopping seas before the wind, which was driving right against the rocky coast of the Island. The waves ran in over the shelving slope of the beach, and then broke with tremendous violence at the foot of the cliff, throwing their white crests of foam against its steep face. On the top of this rocky wall were the neat dwellings of the coast-guard, each with its strip of garden in the front and at the back. The poor young lord, Salcombe said, had given the men ground to plant their potatoes, and was constantly showing them kindness. It would be a long time before they would have their pockets and tobacco-pouches as liberally filled again.

While the men were hurrying down to give us a helping hand in the landing—no easy matter with such a sea setting upon the rocks—I perceived a large vessel standing off and on, as if baffled in her attempts to get

round the spit of land that ran out beyond the Islets. The sailors on board the Shamrock said they had noticed her all the afternoon, and fancied that she was an American ship, from the manner in which she was rigged. Salcombe thought her situation a perilous one, unless she had a pilot well acquainted with the coast; and that, if the wind increased to a strong gale, she might be driven upon the rocks, which, in his opinion, she had approached too nearly. We lost sight of her as we pulled in for the shore, and the men had tough work to make way through the line of breakers. I saw the tall figure of Moriarty on the beach, waiting for us; and heard from the lieutenant that he had lately been placed in charge of this remote outpost.

"A finer fellow," he said, enthusiastically, "never stepped! It is only a pity his head should run on anything but his duty. I suspect that is what has kept him back always. He is too good for his present station."

A great wave that nearly capsized our boat stopped his praises. The next moment we floated over the bar, and landed safely. Our coming was quite an exciting surprise to the men at that lonely spot; for communications with the shore were very unfrequent. They had not heard a word about the young lord's death, and I saw deep grief on their

manly faces as the tidings spread among them.

While Salcombe was visiting the station, I turned my steps inland, pursuing a rough path which led from the buildings up among bare, inhospitable-looking hills. The scenery rather improved as I went on, but it was still wild in the extreme. There were apparently no trees on the island, but the grey rocks over my head were massed together in the grandest forms, and were, many of them, encrusted with such curious mosses and lichens that the soft tints of green and brown toned their otherwise harsh outlines; and, from the higher angles of the pathway, splendid views of the coast were visible, while, in the opposite direction, stretched a broad, unbroken expanse of sea and sky. Suddenly, the bare rocks seemed to open before me, and I plunged at once into a lovely combe, such as might have parted the hills of our southern English coast. A stream ran trickling down the rocky glen over sharp pebbles, with here and there a large stone, flat and white, laid down to afford an easier mode of crossing the water.

Dunleary's cottage, which stood at the bottom of the glen, was nothing better than its name denoted—a mere fisherman's lodge—such an one as, on the Irish coast, is often built and temporarily furnished for persons

who are fond of sport, or of bathing. It was all on one level, and there was no attempt at ornament about it. The blue waves, sheltered here from the prevalent gales, rolled calmly in, underneath steep walls of rock, almost to the open door of the cottage. Above their low moan, I could hear the sea and wind raving on the other side of the bold promontory I had passed over; but, in this land-locked cove, the voice of the storm was hushed. Opposite to me, on the high ground behind the lodge, I saw another look-out station, to which the track I was pursuing led upwards, after passing the garden-gate. The place altogether had no more pretension about it than the dwellings I had seen on the cliff belonging to the coast-guard service.

As I walked quickly up the garden, if so it might be called, where a few hardy plants had been trained over the rocks, and tufts of the sea-pink were in bloom, I heard a voice singing, as it had done many a time at Moraston, snatches of old Irish airs. Words and tune, I knew them well; but there was more blitheness now, than I ever remembered their possessing, in those rich, clear accents. A woman's passionate heart was in the wild carol, and the warm gush of happiness in every unstudied rise and fall of the simple melodies.

The cottage was a long, low building, thatched and whitewashed, with a rustic porch, round which clung the tendrils and ripening bunches of out-of-door grapes, just beginning to purple in the warm sunshine. The door stood open, and I saw hanging on pegs, against the wall, a boat-cloak and rough, seamanlike cap, with one or two oilskin capes calculated to keep out the salt-water. There were also other articles of a sportsman's gear, and set among these were girlish sketches of The Cedars, and of the old grey church backed by the downs above Moraston. Its ivied clock-tower, more ancient than the rest of the sacred edifice, rose up close to the spot where the monument of the first Lady St. Lo was faintly indicated. My own mother's humbler grave was near it, in the deep shadow of the row of churchyard elms which crossed the picture. It seemed strange to have such old familiar images brought back, as I crossed the threshold of the young Irish sportsman's cabin.

Such as its rude appointments were, Lady Honoria St. Lo appeared, at home among them. Even her dress was different, and worn after another fashion, from any garb in which I had yet seen her. The warm colour which the Irish peasantry love so well—the deep red madder-brown—prevailed. The

short, full skirt and open boddice, with plain but snow-white sleeves and chemisette, were such as many a rustic lass might have worn at some country merrymaking. The long hair, plaited and coiled round her graceful head, was fastened with a silver skewer or bodkin. Only the small, neatly-sandalled foot, the soft white hand, betrayed the high-born lady.

I shall never forget the vivid blush that coloured her cheeks, the bright, happy look there was in her eyes, when she raised them from some work that lay on her lap, as I entered. I thought of Aunt Margery's lessons in sewing, when I saw the Earl's fair daughter thus usefully employed. All that had since passed, every anxiety I had lately felt on her account, vanished for a few moments, while memory flew back to the dark old parlours at Moraston, where, as a girl, she had been loved, and happy.

I believe Lady Honoria was thinking of that time also, as she rose and put her hand in mine, with a simple gesture as if she were welcoming me to her home, and a glance round the rude, unpainted, and unpapered walls of the simply-furnished room in which I found her.

“ Ah, Charles! who would have thought of your finding me here? Is it Dunleary that told you?—where is the boy hiding? Do

come in and rest! You see I have not forgotten dear Aunt Margery's lessons of usefulness."

The vivid blush deepened on her cheek, and she looked anxiously towards the door, as if expecting Dunleary to follow me. I shuddered at the cruel task before me. At the moment, I was so absorbed in the thought how best I might prepare the poor, young, unsuspecting, happy-looking creature for the blow I must inflict, that I forgot to wonder at finding her in that strange, wild place alone.

My silence surprised her. "Is it that you are angry with me, Charles?" she said, humbly. "Well, perhaps, I deserve it. I've done many things since I was at Moraston that your good father and aunt would be grieved to hear; but Dunleary, if he told you anything, should have said how I was driven to it, when there seemed no refuge for either of us but the grave or misery. I've learned to think more kindly of him, too, and of every one, since I was so sorely tempted."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Honor," I said, using the old appellation, and catching at the words, of which, however, I did not understand the meaning. "Your brother has been ill, and, more than once, when he scarcely knew what expressions were on his tongue, he said, he hoped you had forgiven him. I did

not know before that you had ever had any serious disagreement."

"Yes, once we parted angrily; but that is all over, long since. Why does not he come in and kiss me? There's nothing to sunder us now!" she said, impatiently. "If he knows where I'm to be found, and sent you to tell me he was safe and well, why couldn't he come to see me?"

Her colour faded as she looked in my face. I could not speak, and, as the shock of a mighty grief touched her, I hated myself for having brought it upon her.

"Don't speak!" she said, cowering before me. "I can read it, without that. I couldn't bear it—the punishment of my fault! Oh, Charles! was it laid upon him?"

"Who is with you, Honor?" I asked. "This is a great trial. Have you no friend, no kind woman near, to help you to bear it?"

"There's no woman but myself, and the coast-guard men's wives, on the Island," she said, simply. "Don't trouble about that, Charles. I'm not much used to soft girlish comforting, and I don't like it. Tell me, yourself, what brings you?"

She still did not realise the dreadful loss she had sustained; though she guessed that some evil had befallen her brother.

"I'll go to him at once, Charles, if you'll

take me. It's best not to linger. Is it a fever he has got, and who's nursing him? You shouldn't have left him, even to save me sorrow, when the sickness was so strong upon him. Perhaps, though, he's at Moraston, with your father. Next to my God, I've faith in his care of him!"

Her simple earnestness inexpressibly moved me. "I did not leave him, dear Honor, while human help could avail," I said, slowly, and watching her anxiously as I spoke. "You could not, surely, think that I would part from one you loved so dearly,—whom you gave into my care, and that of one other who did his part as faithfully,—while I could do aught to save him, or even to assuage his suffering?"

A deep, long groan told that she caught my meaning. The next moment, she lay insensible in my arms. I carried her to a chair near the window, and threw water from a ewer on the table in her face, bathing her hands and touching her wan lips with the sparkling fluid, which was as cold and clear as crystal. When she revived a little and saw me near her, the desire to hear more returned; but I cannot repeat her broken, hurried questions, nor the particulars of poor Dunleary's illness. One sorrowful detail followed another, as we sat in that lone place, with no sound in my

ears but her weeping, and the trickling of the stream over the pebbles as it ran past the cottage. The wailing of the wind, rising higher and higher, was unheeded by either of us, though it had lashed the sea between the rocky islet and the coast of Antrim into a foaming whirlpool.

The quick, firm step of one of the coast-guard men on duty, who was coming up the garden-path, attracted my attention, and I went out to meet him, intending to send Salcombe a message, for it seemed impossible to leave Lady Honoria. The man told me the wind had risen so much that the lieutenant doubted whether it would be prudent to put to sea, unless we were off directly. He wished me to come down and see what I thought of the weather. When he had performed his errand, the honest fellow paused for a moment, and then he said, in a lower tone, with tears in his eyes,—

“I beg your pardon, sir, but we all feel for her so! How does the poor lady bear it?”

I told him I scarcely liked to leave Lady Honoria alone, and he said his wife was coming up to see if she could be of any use or comfort to her. Determining that I would not quit the Island without understanding her position better, and that, if her own home were so intolerable as to make her prefer a dwelling

among these honest coast-guard men to the Castle of Dunleary, I would offer her the shelter of my father's roof at Moraston, I went—after saying a few words in explanation, to which she hardly listened—to speak to Salcombe. Rain and spray were driving wildly across the cottage-garden, while the sea, though so near, was entirely hidden by the mist that had, within the last half hour, swept over it.

CHAPTER II.

As we mounted the hill, a clearer prospect was before me. The fog, that lay thick upon the smooth water in the cove, had passed over the sea, driven by the violence of the wind, and the waves ran mountains high, tumbling and tossing in wild chaotic confusion, as far as we could see. The black clouds on the horizon were broken by the sharp ridges of white foam; and, wild as the weather was already, it was evident that a worse storm was rising in the west.

Salcombe was talking in front of the buildings to the chief boatman. They were both looking anxiously seaward, where, at what appeared to me to be a considerable distance from the Island, but within the vortex caused by the hidden rocks, I saw the American vessel, and booming across the waters, momentarily, came the sound of the guns she was firing in her distress; each flash showing distinctly, as it parted from her side,

against the black heaving billows that were threatening to engulf her.

Moriarty bowed gravely and respectfully in answer to my recognition, but did not speak when I came up. Salcombe was in the greatest agitation and uncertainty; and every man in the Island was congregated on the platform, where he stood watching the ship aground, under an angry sky, amid roaring breakers.

“Here’s a pretty business, Frankland! Just look at those confounded Yankees! I told you they would lose their ship, and, as sure as fate, she’ll go to pieces! She’s got fast on that ledge of clay, and, ten to one, has the sharp point of a rock through her keel at this minute. Well, I can’t help it! I didn’t bring her into peril! and hang me, if I believe I can get her out of it! and here are these brave fellows, for whose lives I hold myself responsible, every one of them with a wife and children to upbraid me—want me to sanction their putting off to help her. I can’t do it! They’ll be lost, to a dead certainty; but, at the same time, it’s a shocking thing to see those poor fellows firing away, and not to be able to save them. Aye, aye, to be sure!” he continued, addressing the men. “Your best chance is with the tide. Upon my soul, I don’t think

you'll ever come back! What do you say to it, Frankland? I don't like to check their courage, but it is a most fearful risk. Just suppose their boat should be lost! Do you really think any number of Yankees are worth the lives of such a gallant set of true-born Britons?"

I was not seaman enough to venture to advise, but the continued firing of the signals of distress from the ship, at intervals, was a thrilling sound, that went to the hearts of the brave men around me. I believe they knew as well as Salcombe that the duty they were about to perform was a very perilous one, but none save cheerful words were heard among them. Moriarty was the foremost. There was an expression of dauntless courage in his face, and his comrades made way for him with more respect than they paid to our irascible lieutenant. They revered the spirit that was in him. As he leapt into the tossing boat and grasped the tiller, the muscles of his wrist were firm as iron. The largest boat belonging to the station had been got ready, and as wave after wave ran up higher and higher on the beach, and the thunder began to roll in the distance, with now and then a few large, heavy rain-drops falling from the dark sky, the men hastily concluded their preparations. In spite of the inclement

weather there were women on the platform, watching what was going forward, but they did not stay the proceedings. I heard low, choking sobs near me, but the noble, faithful hearts bore their load of grief and apprehension quietly. Salcombe paced up and down in an agony of disquietude, without uttering any further protest.

Down came the rain in sheets, blackening the waters, and hissing as it fell. The waves seemed to rise up to meet that sharp, swift tempest. The boat was launched amidst the low wailing of the women, and the ominous roll of the thunder gathering over us louder and faster, but as yet not so fearful as the rushing of the stormy wind.

It did not in the least surprise me, when Salcombe had exhausted his prudent observations, to see him leap into the small boat of the cutter, which her crew, without heeding what he was saying, had been getting ready for sea. My own impulse to follow him was quite unconquerable, and we were soon pulling through the surf after the coast-guard men's wherry; but our small craft could not meet the seas that broke on the rocky bar along the coast. A monstrous wave lifted us up and overset the boat, splitting her timbers and wetting us all to the skin, but not doing further mischief; since, being all of us good

swimmers, we were able, though not without difficulty, to regain the shore.

There was nothing left for us but to watch Moriarty and his companions making their way steadily towards the stranded ship. Not a word was spoken near me, as the wherry, after clearing the breakers, was pulled swiftly through the dark waters. Though the rain came down in torrents, not even the women stirred; every eye was bent upon the struggle; each man among us, standing idly on the shore, felt his courage quail as he counted, for those gallant hearts who were gone forth upon that desperate errand, the chances of safety.

I heard a half-suppressed, pitying exclamation pass from mouth to mouth, when Lady Honoria came through the people standing near me towards the signal-station. Salcombe gazed at her as if she had been an apparition, and then, when convinced that his senses had not deceived him, he went up and spoke to her. I have no doubt he was entreating her to go under shelter, but she shook her head, and with her eyes fixed upon the sea, and her breath coming shorter each moment, she remained watching, with the same anxiety which filled the breasts of the women on the platform,—the wives and sisters of

Moriarty's companions,—for the return of the preventive boat.

A faint sound came across the water—was it a cheer in token of success, or a cry for aid? We knew not, for the wherry had lately been lost to sight amidst driving clouds of spray. A few instants more, and there was a momentary lull. We could see, as the mist which the foam made cleared off, the sea as far as the reef with no boat upon it.

A wild cry rose from the spot where stood the affrighted women, who had seen their husbands and brothers depart from the shore, whence they now sought in vain on the heaving waters for the speck they had been watching so anxiously. The men rushed up to their waists into the sea, and, at all risks, a boat was manned, but she filled with water and capsized in the attempt to launch her.

It seemed that the storm, violent as it was, had been only gathering force until this instant of terror; for, with a fiery flash, the clouds parted, and torrents of water descended upon us. A sudden darkness succeeded the lightning, and the waves thundered almost as loudly on the pebbly beach as the rattling peals rolled in the sky overhead. No hand could launch—no eye could see through that dark pall to steer the course of a boat, and we

were forced to leave those brave men who were abroad upon the deep to their fate; if, indeed, they had not met it, when that faint cry came over the waves, which had been answered only by the thunderbolt.

Hasty ejaculations from the men—the shrieks and weeping of the women—mingled with the tempest, when this terrible calamity broke upon us. Help there was none to give, for no other boat belonging to the station could hope to weather the storm, and Salcombe sternly forbade the attempt. He bitterly repented having suffered any of his men to leave the shore. Vainly we watched and waited, though the sea gradually, after several hours, smoothed down in some measure, and the American vessel, to our surprise, as the wind went round with the sun, shook out sail after sail of her snowy canvas, and floated gaily, mockingly away, regardless of the sore hearts she was leaving behind her.

Insensible to grief and terror, Lady Honoria had been carried into the buildings, where she was tended lovingly by the women belonging to the station. The poor young lady, they said, was beside herself with sorrow—no one had such cause to suffer. She had faithful, though humble friends about her, but she did not heed our services. The freshness of her grief was dulled by utter exhaustion into

apathy, and she seemed to be unconscious of all that was passing round her. In this state I saw her, but she did not know me. She lay with the beautiful, blooming face I had seen that morning, now pale as marble, turned to the wall. It was almost more than I could endure to look upon her, thus prostrated; but I bore it, and then I went to Salcombe, who, man as he was, needed consolation as he had never done before.

He said it was all his fault that the misfortune had occurred; and, the next moment, was hotly angry as the idea suggested itself that Temple might blame him. He was determined to give up the command of the cutter,—to do whatever was rash and intemperate, sooner than await tranquilly the result of an inquiry. I do not know whether the advice I gave him was the best he could have received; but I think the account which he penned at last of the lamentable accident we had both witnessed, was less calculated to do him injury than his first hasty effusion. He was severely blamed, nevertheless; and the order sent down for his removal to a distant station pained him so much, that he hastily wrote to express his wish to retire from the service.

I did not mention to Salcombe, who was full of wonder respecting Lady Honoria's

sojourn on the Island, any of the wild and vague conjectures floating through my brain; and when he observed how much my spirits were oppressed, he had the delicacy to forbear asking me a single question. I saw that he deeply compassionated her; and his silent sympathy and considerate reserve made us better friends than ever.

She had not spoken a coherent word since we conveyed her to the buildings; and when, towards evening, her father himself came to take her away, she seemed quite indifferent as to what became of her; though she shuddered and fainted when she was carried down to the quay and placed on board the boat belonging to the *Mayflower*. There was a conviction rooted at my heart, that hers was wounded even more sorely by the havock wrought by the gale, than when the tidings pierced it of young Dunleary's death at sea.

A watery gleam of sunshine broke out from behind a heavy cloud, and then faded away and it was across a grey and troubled sea that we floated:—Lady Honoria's pale face supported on my arm—her hand clasping mine as she might have done her dead brother's. The old Earl, overwhelmed with grief and alarm at the state in which he found her, sat watching his almost lifeless child with a tenderness I scarcely believed to have been in

his nature, but which lacked the strength that should have given her confidence in his protection.

The small, trembling fingers closed on mine convulsively when we came alongside the yacht, and measures were adopted to raise that fair, helpless creature to the deck. Colonel O'Malley was anxiously expecting us, and seemed earnest in his efforts to be of use; but, as the chair in which she was placed was lifted on board, Lady Honoria shrank away from him with a horror which she did not attempt to conceal. He did not again proffer assistance, when he saw that she refused to touch his hand, but went forward among his crew, while the gloom I had noticed in his face changed to anger; and I heard violent words pass between him and the sailing-master of the yacht, confirming the truth of a report which had reached me, that his temper was a most ungovernable one. More than once, his arbitrary and capricious orders had risked the safety of his vessel, his own life, and the lives of all who might be sailing with him.

Colonel O'Malley, though he did not again offer any direct attention to Lady Honoria, took the lead in the arrangements made to facilitate her landing. Salcombe was on the quay, having returned in the cutter, after a vain attempt to rescue from the reef any

survivor of the boat's crew who might have reached the rocks. He shook his head when I questioned him, and his face was pale with emotion, as he told me how much distressed Temple had been. Moriarty was a great favourite with him. He had rather have lost any man in the service than this brave fellow. More than one heart would bleed for him.

Salcombe stopped, and looked with deep commiseration at the pale form which, at that moment, we were assisting to raise from the boat, and place in the carriage wherein the Countess St. Lo had come to the water's edge to meet us. Lady Honoria had fainted once more in the arms of her father. Her agony, when she first came in sight of the rock of Dunleary, had been so great that it seemed inhuman to revive her.

"Let her alone, Frankland! Better thus, — better dead, than living to bear what she must go through, if consciousness return!" Salcombe said to me, in a whisper. "If sorrow for her brother did not kill her, a worse blow has fallen since. She will never lift up her head again."

I did not answer him, but the tone of his grief, and even the random ejaculations of the people on the quay, struck me as more natural, and wounded me less, than the manner in which Lady St. Lo ostentatiously ex-

hibited her sympathy. I thought there was more truthful feeling in the words of a hard-featured peasant woman, who was elbowing her way through the press of the people, than in the beautiful Countess's concern for her step-daughter.

“ Sure, then, no one on arth has such cause for sorrow ! Och, wirrasthrue ! will she ever win through it ? The morn, to have love and life round her pillow, and now look at her ! Him that was dearer than life took from her, and niver a bit of comfort left. It's well to be ould like me. The young head, with its crown of golden locks, lies lower, when trouble like this comes, than the lone, sorrowful widow who has seen her children taken from her, as I have, one by one. Her treasures are all reft away at once.”

The poor creature wept bitterly as she spoke ; and the kind-hearted, poverty-stricken women near her, while they tried to comfort, shared in her sorrow. Meanwhile, Lady Honoria, insensible to grief or sympathy, was lifted into the carriage. Her father, with streaming eyes, thanked Salcombe and myself for our assistance ; and we stood still, silently watching her, as she was borne swiftly away from us.

I had been somewhat surprised at seeing nothing of Captain Fairfax, but, as soon as

the Earl's carriage had driven off, one of the sailors of the *Retribution* came up, bringing me a note from him. He wished me to return on board, the ship being under orders to sail the next morning. There was no mention of the Earl's family, nor of any intention, on our Captain's part, of landing; but I felt that I could not leave the country without seeing Lady Honoria again. After spending an hour with Salcombe at his cottage, we walked together along the cliffs to Dunleary.

I should have preferred finding the Earl alone, but Lady St. Lo and Colonel O'Malley were both with him in the room at the Castle to which I was shown. The old Earl was in the deepest dejection, and his usually fluent powers of speech now seemed stayed by some inward sensation of embarrassment.

I noticed with pain a certain wandering look in his eyes, as if the mental powers which he had abused were failing him. Colonel O'Malley, on the contrary, was firm and positive in his manner. I could have spared his interference, and an invincible feeling of repugnance came over me, when he spoke of Lady Honoria's sufferings; but the Earl was dumb—Lady St. Lo acquiescent. The Colonel seemed by their joint approval to take the lead in the family.

When I appealed directly to Lord St. Lo for permission to see his daughter, the

Countess hurriedly came forward. It was impossible, she said, to comply with my request. The best medical aid in the kingdom had already been sent for, and at present a physician of eminence from the county town, together with the family surgeon, were in constant attendance upon Lady Honoria. Her step-mother spoke of her, now, with warm expressions of interest and compassion; and, when Lord St. Lo confirmed the denial I had received from the Countess, and at the same time assured me that the measures most likely to promote his daughter's recovery had been taken, I was forced to submit to their decision.

Fairfax did not ask me a single question when I went on board. He appeared to be entirely taken up with preparing to get under weigh, and the *Retribution* put to sea within half an hour after I stepped on deck. There was more reserve between us than ever, and I am certain that he dreaded unspeakably any mention of what had occurred to me since we parted. Nevertheless, in the bitterness of our hearts we sympathised with each other; and I believe that one of the most painful hours of our lives was passed while we watched the Rock of Dunleary gradually diminish, and at last vanish from our sight, as the swelling waves rose between our vessel and the Irish coast.

CHAPTER III.

THE old house in the village-street seemed greatly altered when I next crossed its threshold. In part, the change was in my own mind, but it was not entirely imaginary. The moving spring of usefulness within our home, the parent who had ever taught us, by precept and example, that pleasure, and even comfort, must be made subordinate to duty, was now perforce condemned to a life of monotonous inaction.

Though I had been told that my father had sustained a severe accident, when driving on a dark night to visit a patient, I did not fully know its result. It was difficult to pardon the concealment, however kindly meant, which Aunt Margery had practised. My father himself had not approved of it, but he shrank from letting me see the altered characters which he could only form with his left hand, and permitted his sister to conduct the correspondence. I believe, too, that he

did not wish to interfere with my prospects ; and he must have known that, when made aware of the serious nature of the injury he had met with, I should at once give up every other engagement, to come to his assistance.

As it was, strangers had done more for him than his own children ; and he told me, with unwonted softness, of the great kindness which had been shown by those from whom, during most of his life, he now thought that he had been too much inclined to stand aloof. His professional brethren, little as they knew personally of their recluse neighbour, had, one and all, aided him ; taken his long rounds of practice in turn, and fulfilled his arduous duties for him.

“ It is a better world, Charles, than I have hitherto supposed it,” he said to me ; “ and I do believe that these harsh trials are sent to teach us how much of the hardness we complain of is in our own hearts. At least, I grant it to be so, when young fellows who used to be wild and unsteady, and got many a lecture from me for their ignorance, have been riding half over the country on rough winter nights to serve me, and give me the reward of hearing that my words first made them change the course they were entering upon, and take seriously to business.

Next to the cure of souls, that of the poor, frail, perishing human body, is a grave undertaking ; and so they found it, when they gave their minds to their profession, instead of scampering off to races and merrymakings, and letting life and death, pain and grief, wait upon their idle pleasure. Now that I have been ill myself, I can better understand the satisfaction it is, after hours of waiting, to hear the Doctor's gig stop at the door. No one would believe how I long to see my poor patients among the green passes and sheep-walks of the hills again !”

His voice faltered, and my heart sank as I looked in his face, and saw that the exercise in which he formerly delighted was now painful and fatiguing. For the present I gave up all intention of going afloat, and resolved not to separate from him. How I missed him, when days, weeks, and months went on, and it became an habitual task to supply his place ! when I saw the gig brought to the door, and the old mare stand quietly waiting for her master ; for the kind hand to be carelessly laid on the rein, that never wilfully distressed the faithful animal, who put forth her best paces without a touch of the whip as soon as the rough, steep road mended. I think there must have been some resemblance in our voices, for the mare would prick up her

ears and hasten on when I talked to her encouragingly, as he used to do, if the business he was upon would not admit of delay.

Edward was much estranged from home since his marriage, and had just accepted such an appointment as I would formerly have given worlds to obtain, in one of the colonies. I did not envy him now; the chains of home-love and duty were closely wound about my heart. I was less hopeful, but more patient; and, relinquishing every ambitious expectation, I resigned myself to the tasks, of which every day spent since that time in performing them has taught me the importance, and which, even then, I had ceased to despise.

It was well for me that these employments were arduous, and, gradually as I entered into them more fully, became engrossing; for there was in my heart a root of bitterness which might otherwise have overspread it. Too much of sorrow and suffering met me in many shapes for me to believe that my own allotted burthen, when compared with the weight imposed on others, was a heavy one; yet still, as I journeyed on along those quiet roads, day after day, I felt it pressing upon me; and many a chance occurrence—many an object past which I hurried—recalled the memory of one who had been too long an inmate of our home, not to

be linked with the wild dales and uplands that lay around and above it.

There was no place that troubled me more when I visited it than The Knowle, and I was frequently called upon to stop there. Kate's mother, the meek woman whose tears so much annoyed the cross sailor, was now utterly broken down in spirit, and the victim of a serious malady. I had heard from my aunt that no one knew exactly what had become of the beautiful girl who had once been the ornament of the farm. She had displeased Mrs. Margaret Frankland by dressing above her station, after—for reasons yet unexplained—she had quitted Lord St. Lo's family. The fine work by which she maintained herself was said, by the few customers who could afford to purchase it, to be done as a matter of favour; and, now that her flight from home laid her character open to suspicion, many were ready to avenge themselves for slight instances of disregard or haughtiness.

After suffering for a long time in silence from the aspersions cast upon Kate, the widow of Hezekiah Brand took the first decided step she had ever ventured upon in her life. Kate had disappeared from The Knowle very shortly after my last visit to Moraston; and, without saying a word to

any one, the quiet woman, who seldom went half a mile from her own door, packed up a few clothes, and departed, it was supposed, to look for her. When she returned, several months afterwards, with grievous sadness in her face, and sickness preying upon her, it was believed that the mother and daughter had been together; but of this there was no proof. It only rested on conjecture. However that might be, if she was acquainted with the secret of Kate's present residence, she kept it faithfully;—neither prayers nor threats could draw it from her. Since she had been so ill, her brother-in-law treated her more kindly, and respected her manifest sorrow. He solaced himself occasionally with abusing his own mother, who never took it to heart; and he went about with a frown on his brow, grimmer than ever; frightening the birds from the cherry-trees whenever he took his hands out of his pockets to fire off his old musket at the sparrows; while, nevertheless, their saucy broods seemed to increase more rapidly about the buildings of The Knowle than near any other equally lonely homestead.

We were still friendly, and he had not transferred to me the dislike he formerly professed to entertain for my father. The old dame was as hospitable as ever, but

there was a dark shadow over the place. Even her genial nature acknowledged it, and, though her good temper still showed itself, she did not laugh now as of yore.

“Leave off twisting yourself about like a rope’s-end, old dame ! and let the young gentleman give the poor creature something that will keep body and soul together. She’s as crazy a craft as ever I came across, and looks as though she’d go to pieces if the wind rose,” said Matthew, one day when I was visiting his sister-in-law. “There’s real trouble come upon her now ; and, though it’s all her own fault for bringing up her children so badly, I’m sorry for her. I know what it is when a crew deserts ; and she’s a helpless being to be left to shift for herself. The girl was handy, too, though full of foolish fancies ; and the youngsters minded her, and loved her better than she deserved. Her mother is no better than a baby ; and the old woman’s getting childish. Miss Kate needn’t have left them as she did.”

I believe some unaccustomed touch of soft feeling came over the man as he spoke. He stopped suddenly and went to the door, where he stood whistling as he used to do for a wind, at the entrance of his hut on the beach, when other mortals were praying for calm weather. When he turned back and

faced me the old savage gleam was in his eyes.

“It’s but seldom your father has set foot on this doorstep since I’ve lived here, and yet he has come once too often. I mean the time when he brought the young lady who took a fancy to our girl, that has been the ruin of her. Though I’m not given to praising, and see more folly than sense mostly in womankind, Kate was a good girl once. When that poor creature up-stairs is gone—and it won’t be long first—we shall lose every chance of knowing what has befallen her daughter. Hang me if I can be hard upon her now; but could not you just set her talking?—There used to be no end of the long yarns between my mother and her; and now, just because I’d part with my last rope to hear them set to as they used to do, they sit mum at their work, when she can creep down a bit, and I hear the clock ticking as regular as if it were a death-watch. It’s more than I can bear sometimes of an evening, and I wish I had gone back to the Spanish Main or the Brazils, and never set my foot on English ground, after my last voyage. Anyhow that was not a pleasant one; and when a man has a bad captain, a ship is worse than a prison, and he’s glad to get home, if it be with only such a bit of a hammock to swing in as I hung up in

that cabin on the beach where you used to come and see me. I shouldn't mind if I could but get at the rights of it, and make out how that poor lass was spirited away; though I fear we shall hear nothing but what is grievous, if she ever answers to her name, before that great muster-roll is called which we, none of us, can shirk from answering. How came her mother to leave her?—for, I'm certain, they were together;—and what's brought her to this pitch that she can't speak, or even cry, heartily?—she that used to be such a talker! I hate to hear that low sob, more like a catching of the voice, and to see her eyes dry and tearless. Hang me if I don't miss her constant whimpering!—it was better than no sound at all about the house.”

He chafed and fumed as much as he used to do when the poor widow's weeping irritated him; and, indeed, I thought myself that her quiet sadness was more affecting than floods of tears; but I told him that I had tried in vain to win her confidence. The only time I had ventured to mention Kate's name, her mother was so dreadfully distressed, that I dared not recur to the subject.

“That's it!—Just set her going, and you can't stop her tears. I've tried it myself, and thought the poor thing was dying,” said Matthew. “It is no common grief that

has brought her to this pass. Generally speaking, crying does not hurt that soft-hearted kind of women. It's meat and drink to them;—aye, and grog too,—a sort of stimulus that keeps them up; and, once use them to it, they can't go on without it. But, now she's almost given up complaining, I don't know what to make of her. And who's to tell me what's become of our poor girl, when even her own mother has skulked into her grave, ashamed to own it?"

His manner contradicted his words, and, I am certain, he felt deeply for his brother's daughter; but the unhappy mother's reserve was impenetrable. Neither to me nor to the kind old matron would she breathe a word respecting her daughter, though it was evidently some hidden sorrow, on her account, which was wearing away her life.

My Aunt Margaret told me, soon after I came home, that she should take advantage of my being at Moraston to visit her sister, who complained frequently of the selfishness of young people, and seemed to have fallen into bad health again. Mrs. Henry Frankland was a brisk, active woman, an excellent manager, and devoted to her daughters but not a sympathetic companion for an invalid. The girls loved amusement, and their liveliness and beauty brought more company to the house

than suited Aunt Mary's taste. She often longed, she said, to be living with her sister quietly in the cottage, as they did for so many years before these children grew up.

I scarcely knew whether Aunt Margery's smile or sigh was the saddest, as she refolded the frequently-read letter. Our house had been her home too long, and we cherished her too much for her to like to leave it; but her sister was the person most especially left to her charge after the death of their parents, and I am sure she was gratified that the old time when they lived alone together was looked back to by Mary with regret. My father did not think that her absence from us would last long. He feared that his younger sister was in a declining state of health, and would not say a word to prevent my aunt from fulfilling what might be the latest labour of love towards her which she was ever called upon to perform.

The memory of this time, quietly as it passed, is very precious to me, but I shall not linger over it. My father's heart was open to me, as it never had been before, and Aunt Margery's departure drew us yet nearer together. Henry—hitherto his favourite son, the living image of our mother—had, in one important respect, disappointed his father, notwithstanding the distinction gained at college,

where he had won a hardly-contested fellowship, and principally resided. He had imbibed, with his scholastic learning, tenets just then coming into fashion, and which have since spread far and wide, subversive, my father thought, of spiritual religion. His fair, pale face, and tall, slight figure, were wasted and rendered yet more delicate than nature intended them to be by ascetic practices; while his set forms of expression and mode of worship offended against the simplicity of doctrine hitherto inculcated in our house. No doubt, our behaviour jarred as much against his changed feelings, and on some points I thought him right; but my father's opinions were too deeply settled to be stirred by the breath of a fanatical boy, as he sometimes termed the young divine; and he believed that Henry's new formularies had a dangerous tendency. His visits were not the same source of happiness to us as formerly, and I rather rejoiced that Aunt Margery, who was rigidly puritanical in her creed, and regarded my father as an oracle, was not present when Henry treated sarcastically the advice and practice of one whom we were bound to revere, and knocked down the arguments of our good rector with as little ceremony as he had treated the parental dicta. He was not asked to preach at Moraston

again, after the first Sunday, when he ascended the pulpit, greatly to the horror of the congregation, in his white surplice; but he declared that the service was conducted in a manner so contrary to what was enjoined in the Rubric, that it gave him pain to sanction it, and that, if invited, he should have refused to officiate.

I saw the head-forester, Duncan Geddes, rise up and leave his seat in church, after the first few words of my brother's discourse. As there was no Presbyterian place of worship in the neighbourhood, he usually attended ours, and was a very punctual and devout member of the congregation. His sounding footstep, not softened, as usual, out of respect to the house of God, was planted firmly and angrily, as he walked the whole length of the aisle. My father said, when this mark of displeasure was commented upon, that he felt much inclined to imitate the honest Scotchman's example. Such mummeries and idol-worship, such bowing and gesticulating, as Henry had inflicted upon us, were more appropriately to be taught and practised in a Papistical chapel than in a Protestant church.

He received the keeper in a very friendly manner, when, not satisfied with this open protest, he came professedly to argue upon the contested matter with my brother, who would

not condescend to answer him. Henry had the strongest notions of clerical authority, and seemed as if he had forgotten that the poorest worshipper at Moraston had always held himself fully entitled to criticise our old rector's somewhat lengthy and rambling sermons. I believe they would have rather given up the rights of free forest and warren that belonged to the town, and even the dearly-loved privilege of crossing the park of Lord St. Lo, which they had so often hotly contested, than surrender the unrestrained use of their tongues when the aged minister went past them, by the grass-grown path leading to the rectory. He was so accustomed to this freedom, that their silence would have offended him.

The next time I met the keeper in the forest was after Henry had left us, and I took care not to enter upon any theological argument. The man had a dogmatical humour, which every year was increasing upon him; and the poor Scottish lassie, who still took care of his house, could hardly lead a cheerful life there. She was not even permitted to braid her bright locks with a snood of blue riband, or to sing, "Charlie is my darling," or any old Jacobite ditty, as she went about her work in the dark lodge. These carnal vanities were forbidden, and, as she had no taste for psalm-tunes, the place was silent and

dull, except when Duncan's pious friends and followers met there.

At times, there was a painful wildness in the poor fellow's eyes, or else a deep dejection about him, that I did not like to see, since it betokened a mind ill at ease, and very far from partaking of that perfect peace and charity which gilded the declining years of my father's life. He had never forgotten Kate Brand, and a bitter vindictiveness filled his soul against those whom he accused of having occasioned her going astray. The old seaman at The Knowle was the object of his especial abhorrence, though they had once been friends, and Matthew had advocated his suit; but Geddes considered that her uncle's bad language and violent temper had been the primary means of estranging Kate from her home.

Duncan still cherished hopes of finding her, and bringing her back, a penitent, to the fold. Stern as he was, had these been realised, I believe there was a deep feeling of compassionate tenderness for her in his breast which would have made him overlook any errors she might have committed, and that he would have taken her to his honest heart and home. But years went past, whitening his once black hair, deepening the furrows in his face, and hardening his character, without bringing her; and it was a

moody, solitary, vengeful man whom I found sitting late on an autumnal evening, reading by the firelight portions of the inspired writings of the Hebrew prophets.

"The stork in the heavens, the crane, and the swallow, know their appointed time. Look, how the birds flock together, and take counsel for the long journey after the harvest is gathered in, and come back to us when there is thick shadow in the woods, and such food to be got as their hearts delight in! The mair's the pity that the poor benighted sons and daughters of Israel heed not the signs of the times!" he said, closing the book solemnly, as I looked in upon him, when passing his house, on my return from a long round.

"You've been visiting the widow and the fatherless, Master Charles," he said, still using the boyish appellation familiar to him when he first taught me the haunts of the game, and how to handle a gun.

"How fares it with the puir broken-hearted woman at The Knowle?"

"But indifferently to-night, Duncan," I said. "Her time on earth is drawing short, and she longs for her release. I came to ask if you could kill some game for her. Her appetite is failing, and she scarcely fancies anything now. I will come this way to-morrow

and call for it, if you will have it ready. My time is too much occupied for me to use my gun often, as I used to do, though I still love sport dearly."

"Surely, surely!" he said, with agitation, "I will not fail you; but I'm glad you did not ask me to take the gift myself. My foot turns back from that door-stane. That auld sinner, with ever a bad word on his lips, raises the carnal spirit within me, till I grow as evil-minded as himself. It's not like the time when the mavis and linnet sang their blithest on the broomy knoll, and the heather bloomed most brightly round her dwelling, while even her step, that passed over them so lightly, brought out the perfume from the wild thyme and grasses that seed themselves by the pathway. That's over and gone! Wherever that poor girl is, she'll be an orphan soon, with the burthen upon her soul of a mother's grief, which she has not done her best to lighten. I'd give the world, if I had it, to fetch her to that poor woman's side in her dying hour, and save her from the curse which rests upon the ungrateful child that, for the pleasures of this perishing world, forsakes its parent."

"Her mother does not accuse Kate of such a sin; let us not lay it to her charge without proof," I said. "Mrs. Brand has never expressed any wish to send for her daughter,

though I am certain she is acquainted with her fate, and she is likewise well aware of her own hopeless condition."

"You think she knows the road to where that unhappy girl is hiding?" said the Scotchman, while an almost savage light gleamed in his eyes. "Do not let her die without naming it! If it led to perdition, I'd follow the least trace she gave, and pluck her out of the very hottest of the fire."

I reproved him for his violent language, and told him that it was useless to torment my poor patient, who had already suffered greatly from Matthew's pertinacity. My own belief was that Kate had bound her mother by a solemn promise not to reveal her place of residence to her uncle; and that, sooner than expose her to fresh persecution, Mrs. Brand had resigned herself to the pain of dying without bidding her farewell.

"It may be so," said Duncan, more quietly; "but I'd walk barefoot to the world's end to bring that puir misguided wean to get her mother's last blessing! She'll ne'er know sleep or rest without it."

There was another and yet sadder possibility which might account for the silence of Kate's broken-spirited mother; but I did not mention it. The dull fire in the man's eye betokened such an unhappy state of mind, that

I hardly knew to what condition the destruction of his yet remaining hope of finding the poor girl might reduce him.

The next day, and the next, and several others, saw me travelling along the wild road leading to The Knowle; and I never passed the Forester's Lodge without finding some offering ready for me to take to the widow. It was not for long that kindness or care could avail her. She sank rapidly, and died at last with the name she had latterly, and, as Matthew considered, so obstinately, refused to pronounce, on her lips. I saw the seaman's bronzed and weather-beaten face lose the colour wind and sun in many climes seemed to have fixed upon it, and the first tears he had shed for years rush to his eyes, when his widowed sister-in-law said, in a clear, firm voice, to the old dame,—

“Don't cry, mother! I shall be happy soon, with our poor Kate, in heaven!”

CHAPTER IV.

CAPTAIN FAIRFAX had always kept up a correspondence with me since the time when our mutual anxiety about poor young Dunleary created a strong tie between us. He had written to me, offering to exert his interest to get me appointed to the ship in command of which he sailed about a year after the *Retribution* was paid off and laid up in ordinary; but my views in life were changed, and I had resolved—not, I confess, without regret—to settle at Moraston, and assist my father in his professional duties. Nevertheless, before Captain Fairfax went, I found time to run down to Plymouth and take leave of him.

He told me many deeply-interesting circumstances, of which his letters had only partially informed me. His earnestness pleased me, and I saw that I was not deceived in the belief I had always entertained, and which his mother also had expressed, that his was a character whereon complete reliance might be placed. He had not forgotten Lord Dun-

leary's last request, and the moment he was at liberty to leave his ship he had returned to Ireland, but his endeavours to gain admittance to Lady Honoria St. Lo's presence were not attended with more success than formerly. The same mystery did not baffle him now, for every peasant on the estate knew that she lay ill of brain fever at the Castle, and that her life was despaired of. The most eminent physicians had been summoned thither from Dublin, and regarded the case as one of extreme gravity. She rallied while he was in the neighbourhood, but not sufficiently to allow of his seeing her.

The next tidings he had been able to procure of the family were that Lord St. Lo, upon his daughter's partial recovery, had taken her abroad, and Captain Fairfax immediately resolved upon following them. Besides the obligation under which Dunleary's dying injunction laid him, he told me that he was actuated by anxiety to satisfy himself whether Lady St. Lo was performing the part of a mother faithfully towards her invalid step-daughter. It was not difficult for me to divine that yet deeper feelings moved him, and that, when he left England, it was with the firm intention of removing the woman he loved from a painful position to one which, I believe, had she shared his feelings, would

have been a happy lot for her ; but he did not mention this wish, nor even allude to it, when he communicated the disappointing result of his investigations.

In spite of Lady Honoria's delicate health, the travellers had proceeded rapidly, and though he found traces of their route, and heard some alarming particulars, Fairfax did not overtake them until he came to Naples, where Lord St. Lo intended to winter. No attempt was made to prevent his seeing and conversing freely with Lady Honoria ; and he did not conceal from me the dreadful shock he had sustained upon finding how much the fine powers of her mind were shattered by illness. In person she appeared to him only the wreck of her former self—the shadow of departed grace and loveliness ; but these, with reviving health, might return. A much sadder alteration seemed to have taken place in her character.

She did not manifest her former dislike to the Countess, but drove with her to public places, and along the shores of the bay ; while the Italians, ardent admirers of the imperishable lines of beauty, called her the English Niobe, and discussed her delicate features and fragile form as if regarding her as a statue rather than a breathing woman. Nor was this impression surprising, since she spoke to no

one, and heeded not the glances directed to her. All her impetuous feelings seemed to have been wept out, or consumed by the burning fever in which she had lain for weeks at Dunleary Castle, senseless or raving. Grief for the loss of her brothers was said to have maddened her; and the Neapolitans, charmed with novelty, and adoring beauty in every shape, recognised it with enthusiasm, even under its present painful aspect.

To her English friend, her death would have been less mournful than this complete prostration of intellect. No one watched or seemed to coerce her, and he saw her sometime *salone*, on other occasions with acquaintances or surrounded by strangers, but always in the same state of spell-bound, stony apathy.

I asked him if she *could* speak, remembering that, in her severe nervous illnesses at Moraston, the power of articulation was at times denied her; and Captain Fairfax replied, that utterance seemed to be attended with difficulty. At times, her lips moved, but no audible word issued from them. Then again, when she was calmer—for this tremulous quiver of the muscles was the only sign ever visible of emotion—she would pronounce a few cold words, enough to show that she was

capable of expressing her wishes, but not affording any indication of inward feeling.

He had even ventured upon the perilous attempt to rouse her by the mention of her brother's name; but Lady Honoria gazed at him with her large, tearless eyes, without appearing to recollect of whom he was speaking. It was quite useless to repeat poor Dunleary's message, and he had given up the endeavour, holding himself acquitted at last of the performance of this painful commission.

Lord St. Lo seemed to feel deeply the distressing state of his daughter's mind, and spoke of it unreservedly. The Countess was still more lavish in her expressions of regret, and appeared to treat her with much kindness. There was quite a parade about consulting physicians, foreign and English; but all regarded the case as beyond the skill of man to alleviate. Time might restore the balance of her mind, or bring on a yet more aggravated calamity.

It would be quite impossible for me to convey any adequate idea of the sensations with which I heard this narrative. Fairfax was deeply affected, and told me that he could not remain long at Naples to witness so painful a spectacle. Lady Honoria bade

him farewell without emotion ; but, when he said that he should mention to me having seen her, the first tears she had shed in his presence rolled down her cheeks, and she exclaimed, with more energy than she had previously appeared capable of displaying,—

“Tell them—Charles Frankland and his father, I mean—that I’d rather have had them by me at Dunleary, with dear Aunt Margery, than all the doctors in the world ! I’d not be the poor thing I am now, if they had been near me !”

There was so much more intelligence in her manner than usual, that Fairfax lingered and put off his journey. He fancied that Lady St. Lo, who was present, showed signs of uneasiness, but she did not interfere, nor throw any obstacles in the way of his seeing Lady Honoria again on the following day, when, however, she had relapsed into a silent mood, from which he could not win her throughout the evening.

The Neapolitans called her *La Pazza*, and raved about her large wild eyes and monosyllabic answers. She never spoke willingly in English ; a faint, soft, Italian word came now and then from her lips,—generally, a childlike entreaty for “*aura*,” “*acqua*,” “*silenzio*,” “*oscuressa* ;”—all betokening to me, as Fairfax faithfully repeated them, that the

fever from which she was supposed to have recovered was still preying inwardly upon her. Her hand, when he touched it at parting, though white and cold-looking as marble, burned like fire; and on her otherwise wan and wasted cheek he often saw one spot of glowing crimson.

Her physical strength seemed to be returning, for she took long excursions with her friends, and even showed at such times, if her mother-in-law's account might be trusted, some of her once high spirit and natural gaiety; but of this Fairfax had perceived no sign. On one occasion, Lady St. Lo told him they had made the ascent of Vesuvius, and the mountain air excited the poor Irish girl so much that it was with difficulty they could persuade her to turn back. The old wilful spirit was in force upon her, and it was terrifying, the Countess said, to see her ride her pony over the rough fields of lava and sulphurous ashes, while the dumb creature shrank uneasily from the hot fumes and scorching soil. Lady Honoria seemed to feel no inconvenience, though, in general, heat distressed her, but rode on fearlessly in front of the party. "My heart stood still for a moment," Lady St. Lo said, in a whisper, "when I heard her singing to herself a wild Irish lullaby, with which the country people about

Dunleary used to rock their babies to sleep ; while her large eyes were full of fire, like that gleaming through the crevices near us. It seemed unwise to trust her on such dangerous ground, but her father was obliged to put his hand upon the rein and turn back by force the pony she was riding ; and she was sullen for several days afterwards."

Fairfax disliked her tone of affected compassion, for something in her plausible manner told him that her concern was not real ; but he felt more sympathy with the Earl, who was in many respects altered for the better. His domestic misfortunes seemed to have sobered and saddened him ; and he led a much quieter life than formerly.

The handwriting of Lord St. Lo, on the cover of a letter directed to my father, attracted my attention, one morning, when I was breakfasting alone. He was not so early a riser as formerly, and, I confess, I waited on this occasion very impatiently for his tardy appearance. When he came down, he read the letter through without word or comment ; then recommenced it, and went through it again more slowly, pondering, as it seemed to me, over every sentence.

While he was thus engaged, memory carried me back to the time when the Earl's little daughter first came among us. I remembered

Lord St. Lo's letter, recommending her to my father's care: its florid phrases, written in bold, clear characters, appeared to fill the pages my father was holding before his eyes, while he slowly drank his tea, and gave me, silently, the cup to refill. I could see from a distance that the Earl's fair penmanship was much altered; the page was blotted, the lines uneven, the letters feebly and indistinctly traced.

The wayward but intelligent girl's impetuous grief, — my father's kindness and judicious treatment, — Aunt Margery's motherly care, — and the manner in which she had regained strength in mind and body, — were, in one brief moment, recalled; and, with these ideas, Fairfax's description of her as he had seen her last, — a breathing statue, — the wreck of all the fair promises of her youth, — insensible to kindness, it might be, to cruelty; — patient with those whom she had once hated, but apathetic and regardless, — blighted in the very bloom and freshness of early womanhood, like a flower in the midst of summer scathed by the eastern blast.

When my patience was fairly exhausted, I inquired for the Earl and his family. My father pushed the letter across the table towards me.

“Read it yourself!” he said, somewhat

testily. "For my part, I can't understand it, and I would rather have nothing to do with the children of his second marriage. He wants me to take charge of the youngest boy. Lady Honoria is going to bring him, next month, to 'The Cedars.'"

So entirely unlooked-for an announcement riveted my attention to the letter which was to afford the desired explanation. The Earl expressed himself rather lengthily, but, to my apprehension, more feelingly than usual. He said that the last four years had been a period of great suffering, and alluded to my visits to the Castle of Dunleary, with a few strong expressions of regard. He had heard from his steward that I was now at Moraston, practising with my father; and he wished to make an appeal to our friendship, of which he declared that he had already received substantial proofs. The fatality which hung over his children seemed about to seize upon the Countess's youngest born. The air of the South did not suit the boy, and Lord St. Lo had been recommended to send him without delay to England.

Lady Honoria, whose health, he rejoiced to say, was much improved, desired to accompany her little brother to The Cedars. The child was a great favourite with her, and the medical men whom he had consulted strongly

advised that they should not be parted. Her recovery from a very alarming state of mental and physical exhaustion was mainly attributable to the interest she had lately taken in this poor little invalid. Lady St. Lo, in some respects, differed from him, the Earl said, in opinion. Then followed a sentence which had been carefully erased. She was naturally averse to parting with the child, and believed The Cedars to be unhealthily situated; but her objections had given way to his own strong impression that Lady Honoria had never been in better health than when she was under my father's care. Then, again, the shaky characters were so blurred and underlined, that I could not make out all the words of a long paragraph vaguely and incoherently expressed, containing something to the effect that they were expecting friends from Ireland, whose arrival might re-awaken feelings prejudicial to his daughter's tranquillity; and with another warm, almost passionate, appeal to my father's kindness in her behalf, and that of the child in whom she was so much interested, the Earl's letter ended.

It was not, as it had formerly been, a point left for us to decide. The charge was laid upon us. Lady Honoria and her half-brother were to come to The Cedars, — were, by this time, travelling slowly towards us; and it was

not likely that we should refuse to do all that lay in our power for one in whom the warmest impulses of our hearts found their centre. Was it an unwelcome certainty?

I do not know what my father felt about it, but to me the time wore away painfully. In his present infirm state of health, the charge of the ailing boy would necessarily devolve on me; but my heart did not warm towards him. I could not picture the Countess St. Lo's son otherwise than as one of the noisy, healthy, riotous group I had beheld sporting constantly about her. This child must be, from his father's expressions regarding his tender age, younger than any I had seen; born, probably, since my last visit to Dunleary.

I had not been at The Cedars for a long time previous to the evening when, at my father's request, I rode over to see what progress had been made in complying with the Earl's directions. Under the dark cedar-boughs, — over the melancholy tarns in the park, — I heard with emotion the thrilling song of the nightingales. They had not visited the place for years, but now the dusky evergreens seemed full of them; one moment, a gush of melody, — the next, a wailing, long-drawn call resounded from the thickets. One voice answered another, and then a soft com-

plaint, low and sweet, was followed by a burst of song, so joyously triumphant, that the pleading tones were drowned by it.

The gardeners were busy clearing away the leaves and smoothing the turf, which had been much neglected. Cartloads of boughs were being carried away, lopped off from the trees near the house. Its white walls gleamed out softly in the fading light. The statues, and ornamental bridges, and summer-houses, were gradually losing their aspect of neglect, as the moss and weeds were cleared away, that had long threatened to hide them. Notes of preparation had sounded everywhere, and women were busy within doors removing covers, and refreshing carpets and hangings. I did not go in, nor interfere with these busy proceedings, but rode home, satisfied that all would be in readiness for Lady Honoria and her little brother on their arrival. The spring was certainly the pleasantest season at which they could visit The Cedars.

CHAPTER V.

I SCARCELY recollect what were the circumstances which delayed Lady Honoria St. Lo's arrival, long after the preparations which were thought necessary had been completed. It might be that the illness of the sick child, to whom she acted the part of a mother, was aggravated by the intense heat which prevailed that season on the Continent. All I know is, that the woods were in full leaf, and the nightingales had departed, before she reached Moraston.

The intervening period had been passed by me in such deep sorrow, that even now an allusion to it is as painful as the touch even of a friendly hand to a wound scarred over but not healed. Never will those feelings cease to move me :—fresh as when the blow was first inflicted are the emotions which rise within me, whenever I speak or write of my father's death. He had been greatly interested in all that concerned Lady Honoria, and had made me tell him every particular

relating to her unhappy destiny with which I was at that time acquainted. Whatever impression he might receive, he said very little on the subject, listening in a fixed, attentive manner, as if he were revolving the case, and then merely muttering that he should see into it more clearly when he looked at her face. That could never deceive him.

As the period originally fixed for her arrival approached, he became very impatient, and ordered the gig out, for the first time for many weeks, that he might go over himself and see if the arrangements made for her were in all respects satisfactory. He seemed contented with them, but greatly fatigued, and went to rest early very soon after his return.

His health had for a long time been failing, but we were not aware that any reason existed for immediate alarm. I do not know whether he himself was acquainted with the extreme precariousness of his situation, but I believe it must have been so, and that the reserve, which was a principal feature of his character, sealed his lips.

Something—I know not what, for the house seemed to be profoundly quiet—awoke me at midnight. I listened, but there was no bell ringing; the street, when I looked out, was empty; no horse-hoofs clattered on

the pavement. The moonlight fell white upon the road, chequered by the flickering of the boughs and spring foliage in the park, stirred by the passing breeze.

A vague feeling of uneasiness prevented my going to bed again. We were so often roused, our sleep was so much broken, that, when undisturbed, I slept soundly. Dressing myself quietly, I went down stairs to see if any person was moving about the house; and, on my way, I stopped, for a moment, at my father's door to listen.

Then, again, I heard a slight sound. I saw—and it was an unusual circumstance—that a light was burning within. There was no need for hesitation, and the door was unlocked. He was awake and praying. I heard my name and those of his two absent sons, and Lady Honoria's, mingled with earnest petitions. While I paused, at a few paces' distance, with the reverence I had felt for him from childhood making me shrink from interrupting him, his voice suddenly stopped. I drew nearer hastily, and met his eyes fixed upon me with a love deeper than I had ever seen in them before. The next instant, with my mother's name upon his lips, he died.

Grave and silent as he usually was, my father was inexpressibly dear to me. Of late, we had been constant companions, and the

unfavourable opinion he once entertained of my abilities had worn off. Edward had other ties, and a far-away home of his own. Henry's opinions alienated him, in some measure, from his parent. We had thus been drawn nearer to each other, and no one who was admitted into the innermost sanctuary of his heart could help learning, as I did, each day, to respect and admire him more.

And now that I look back through the vista of years, I know still better what an irreparable loss I sustained, when, in that dark, solemn hour, my father's soul was taken away. Though, for some years past, our relation to each other had in many respects changed, and his responsibilities had lain upon me, still he was there to advise me, to moderate the impatience of youth, and instil the invigorating principles of that creed which, I firmly believe, he had never for one instant of his life doubted. I saw him before me, between me and the grave, an example of what a man might be, walking humbly before his God, trusting in his Saviour; and I resolved, in the bitterness of that mighty grief, that I would write the precepts which had been his rule and guide on the tablets of my heart, and live on in his old home—so he had willed it for me—in the holy trust and faith which had preserved his soul as pure from

evil as sinful man's might hope to be, till the time arrived when I, like him, should be summoned—it might be, as suddenly, in the watches of the night—to meet my Judge!

Such were the resolutions I formed at that time,—a period which made the deepest impression upon me. I will not say whether they have been kept. Very imperfectly, I fear, has the example he left me been followed; but, for whatever there is of good in me, I bless his memory and my mother's, and one other, to me scarcely less hallowing influence, which through life has been with me. I could not look upon the graves of my parents, as I passed them each Sunday, lying in the deep shade of the churchyard elms, without being reminded of the vows that were upon me, and time has not effaced the recollection. In the old house, in which I live alone, their images are with me; the good they did still survives, and scarcely a day goes by without bringing to my knowledge some fresh, yet untold, trait of the Doctor's benevolence, or of my mother's unobtrusive charity. From the high windows of our home I look on the lone roads over the downs along which his practice carried him; and in my own professional exertions I am perpetually cheered by the warm gratitude evinced for his services. Nor is it only on those rugged hills that his words

are remembered. They have fallen on good ground elsewhere, and are not choked up by the tares and thistles of the world—even among the wealthy and prosperous. There are happy homes in high places of the earth where the good Doctor at Moraston is spoken of with reverential affection, and where the truths he taught are repeated by lisping children at their mother's knee; rude cabins among the Mayo bogs and mountains where, by brightly burning peat fires, those principles of Divine love and human charity have been worked out, and the seed sown on fruitful soil has brought forth a hundredfold.

Lady Honoria's burst of tears at our first meeting comforted me more than any words she could have uttered. It was a long time before she could speak, and the little boy lying on her knee looked up at her wonderingly. He was not at all like the present Lady St. Lo's petted darlings; perhaps it was for that reason his half-sister loved him so dearly.

I did not at first think that the child resembled any of his family. He was fair and pale, with a quiet, somewhat suffering look in his delicate face, which insensibly interested me. The Earl had named him after his second son, Adolphus—the boy who perished at sea in consequence of an act of

disobedience; but this little fellow did not look as if he possessed the impetuous spirit of his namesake.

There was some of the hesitation in speaking which had distressed us in Lady Honoria, and the child's words were few and uttered with difficulty. His large eyes reminded me of Dunleary's, though they were of a different colour—not blue, but hazel mixed with grey; and sometimes there was a melancholy wandering look in them, uncommon at his age, which was barely four years, and extremely painful. Ill health made the little boy apathetic and indifferent to a child's usual amusements. Most part of the day he lay about in sunny places, or rested his head on his sister's shoulder, as he sat on her knee, not complaining of any ailment, but disinclined for exertion.

“Do you think I'll ever rear him, Charles?” said Lady Honoria, when, after a time, he moved slowly away from us. “It's my heart's darling he is, now, and I have nothing else left to comfort me. Sometimes I fancy he'd grow stronger in a cottage at Dunleary. There's one I knew that grew up hardier than my poor brothers, with none but a foster-mother to tend him.”

Her voice was choked with tears, and her eyes followed the child as he played languidly with the leaves that a high wind had brought

down from the trees, trying to put them in little heaps, which the blast scattered about again unmercifully. Very soon he grew tired of his occupation, and came back to us.

“Is it the wind that’s vexing you, my boy?” she said; “sure it’s a cruel thing to contend with. We’ll try, however, if we can’t keep the bits of towers steady.”

Then, very gravely and skilfully, having knelt down, she piled the leaves and pebbles into the semblance of a castle, putting stones upon the leafy mounds to prevent their being blown away. The child was delighted with her performance.

“I’d do anything to make his poor heart lighter—it’s that prevents his speaking. It’s too large for his bosom; and oh, the love that’s in it is past telling! How he came by such feelings I can’t guess,” she added, in a whisper; “you did not think, Charles, you would ever see me cherish *her* son; but there’s no denying how fond I am of him.” There was the strongest emotion in her voice, and a vivid blush coloured her cheek. “Is it because I love him so that he’s unlike the others? I have the same fear for him that used to drive me wild about poor Adolphus and Damian, my own brothers; but then she is his mother—that must prevent her harm-

ing him. Oh, if you knew how glad I was to bring him here! though I little thought what sorrow I'd find you in. I wanted him to be taught as I was taught—to learn the lessons I kept so ill—little dreaming the voice that spoke so kindly and wisely was hushed for ever!”

We were both silent. The child moved slowly hither and thither without uttering a word. The tall trees above us swayed with the breeze which passed through the shrubberies, and rustled the leaves strewn on the path. It was a favourite spot of Lady Honoria's, and a safe and sheltered place for the boy to play in. The walk, bordered by evergreens, led through thickly-planted beeches, which had been allowed to grow up unthinned to an unusual height. Here and there tall pines were interspersed among them; but the underwood had been entirely removed, so that the stems of the trees rose up clear and straight. Before us, the path plunged somewhat steeply into a sandy dell, beyond which it ascended to the top of a hill crowned by a temple, in front of which was a platform commanding an extensive view. The bold curve of the pebble-ridge, and ships passing up and down the Channel, were visible from this spot, which was the highest on the domain. We did not mount the hill now, for the child was

as yet scarcely equal to the exertion, and the wind blew strongly on the summit. It was pleasanter in the shelter of the beechwood, where the leaves and fir-cones strewn about the ground afforded some amusement to the invalid boy. I was watching him earnestly, for Lady Honoria had that day recommended him almost solemnly to my charge. Her whole life, she said, was wrapped up in his; and I could see in her quivering lips, and read in the faltering tones of her voice, that he was, indeed, as she told me—the one living thing left to comfort her for her great losses.

I scarcely know whether she was herself greatly altered. She came before me as such an angel of peace and consolation at that time, that I could not judge of her calmly. There was a pure, Madonna-like beauty in her whole person, quite different from her girlish aspect. Her devoted, unselfish love for the child of the woman who had treated her so cruelly, increased the admiration I felt for her. She seemed to wonder, herself, at her fondness, and often talked on the subject, telling me that when she first revived to consciousness, after her long and terrible illness, it was as if she had awakened from a deep sleep. She did not know who had placed it there, but Lady St. Lo's little boy, which had been born while she was too ill to know what was pass-

ing, lay on the couch near her, and stretched out its arms to her.

Something in the action and in the child's look reminded her of her brothers, who had always seemed to cling to her. She took the little creature to her heart, which, at that time, was sadly desolate, and its touch warmed her. It might be injustice towards the Countess or her own partiality for the boy, but she had always fancied that its mother neglected it, and did not treat this one like the rest of her children. When the poor little thing became ill, and, for a while, gave considerable trouble, she banished it altogether out of her sight, saying that its perpetual crying wearied her. Certainly, it was very unlike her handsome, healthy offspring, whom she had nursed assiduously in the few infantine maladies which had assailed them. She had not wished that Lady Honoria should take the child to The Cedars; but the Earl was peremptory, and she parted from it without a tear.

CHAPTER VI.

I NEVER saw any love but a mother's resemble that of Lady Honoria St. Lo for her half-brother. Waking or sleeping, the child was never out of her sight, and she watched over him with unwearied assiduity. It was quite a new phase of her character which displayed itself; and, for the first time, I saw the wild, deep strength of her Irish heart's best affections.

I believe I was rather jealous of her idolising partiality. The child was for some time not a favourite with me, and I dreaded the effect which might be produced upon her already-lacerated spirit, if, as I at first anticipated from his weak and languid state, she was destined to be deprived of him. It seemed, however, as if the intensity of her love breathed into that nerveless frame fresh life and vigour.

Each day, I saw a change in him. The slow, faltering step grew firmer, the languid walk quickened into a run, the flesh of the

slight limbs hardened, and the colour in his thin cheek became more healthy, and every improvement in the boy told upon his sister. Her gratitude was unbounded for my care of him; but it was, under Providence, her nursing, the sweet influence of her caresses and tenderness, that kept her darling from perishing.

The child won greatly upon me, while, from a sense of duty, and of regard for her, I attended closely to his case. He was so patient and gentle,—affectionate, too, in his own listless fashion; there was so much more that seemed to belong to Honoria herself in this little boy—neglected as she had been in childhood—than to the haughty Countess, that my charge became gradually a subject of deep interest to me.

Very backward as the child was in every respect, it was not to be wondered at that he found a difficulty in answering the simplest questions. One day, when I asked him to tell me his age, he seemed excessively puzzled, and looked up at his sister, but she too was at fault.

“Adolphus and I can’t tell you that, Charles,” she said, sadly. “There’s a long blank in my memory, and his birth must have occurred when my mind was darkest. I never heard Lady St. Lo name the day,

though I once asked her. It's three summers since I woke up from my long trance ; that's all I can tell you."

A very deep shade of melancholy came over her features as she spoke. The child put up his face close to hers, and whispered to her.

Her countenance brightened instantly, as it always did at any mark of intelligence on his part. "He says he minds nothing till I took to him. Why should he? There's nothing but love that's worth remembering, and he had little enough of it previously," she added, in a low voice, after sending the child to a little distance to fetch his playthings. "Oh, Charles! how could she dislike him?—the youngest—the baby, as he was then, that first made my heart, which was turned to stone, warm for him! Is it because he's like *us* that she hates him?"

I chided her for what appeared to me, probably, an exaggeration; but Lady Honoria hardly listened, her eyes followed every movement of the child's dreamily.

"Sometimes, it's Adolphus I'm thinking of," she said; "and sometimes poor Damian; at others, especially when he's sick or sleeping, he seems dearer to me than either. Oh, Charles! is it wrong in me to be so fond of him?"

Her accent of passionate feeling touched me so deeply that, for a moment, I could not answer her. The boy, meanwhile, had gone farther away from us, and was just then out of sight, hidden by a clump of trees at the angle of the walk.

“I think that we should try to regulate all our affections. My father—and I know you venerate his words—would have told us to sit loosely with the world; yet I believe no one had deeper and stronger feelings,” I said. “In fact, precept is easier than practice in such matters; and your love has, I firmly believe, been the best boon yet granted to that little delicate fellow.”

At that moment, a shot very near us in the park, on the verge of which we were walking, sent the blood from Honoria's cheek to her heart;—a frightened cry followed it, and swifter than the arrow parts from the bow, she flew in the direction whence it proceeded. I knew that the sound was not like one uttered by a person in pain, but she did not give me time to tell her so. As I followed her, the forester, Duncan Geddes, came towards me.

“You should not let off your gun so heedlessly,” I said. “Lord St. Lo's child was playing close by, and you narrowly escaped hitting him.”

The man did not answer me, for we were

now in sight of Lady Honoria, who was sitting at the root of a tree with the child in her lap. He was still crying, but more, I think, from grief at sight of a poor little rabbit killed by the keeper's shot than from terror.

Lady Honoria was as pale as death, and her arms were cast about the boy, in the wild abandonment of relief from a dreadful apprehension.

"Is it her bairn?" said the man, who scarcely knew her, perplexed by her attitude. "Now, the Lord be praised, I did not harm him! I'd never have pulled the trigger again, if her little son had been taken from her."

"No, no!" I said. "It is her brother, but scarcely less dear to her. There is no harm done now, only be more careful another time."

While I spoke, Duncan stood earnestly regarding the lady and the child, neither of whom took the slightest notice of us. Lady Honoria was entirely engaged in comforting the boy, and he was still weeping, his tender heart almost broken.

I saw that this casual event had made a strong impression on the keeper. It stirred, probably, some of the superstitious feelings of his nature, for he groaned heavily, and said, in a low voice, with his usual mystical phraseology,—

"It is not in man that walketh to direct his

steps.' Who can ken when the enemy of mankind is tempting him? It may be in the night-time, or suddenly, at mid-day,—in the form of a fiend or an angel! Why doesna the bairn haud his weeping?" he added, while the wildness I had often noticed came into his eyes. "Where got he his hazel een? Tell him not to greet so sair."

The little gentle boy, his notice attracted, looked up and stopped crying immediately. I expected that he would have been frightened at the Scotch keeper, who looked darker and grimmer than usual; but, with the contradictoriness often observable in children, whose likings cannot be commanded, he seemed impressed and attracted by him.

I do not think he connected in any way the appearance of Geddes with the death of the rabbit. Probably, he had never seen a gun in his life, and had no idea what had stopped so suddenly the little creature running across his path. He looked at the pouch, shot-belt, and other sportsmanlike accoutrements of the forester, and seemed amused and forgetful of his late trouble.

Lady Honoria could not recover herself so easily. She remained deadly pale and silent, while the child touched the different objects of his admiration timidly, and finally slid his little hand, which generally shrank from the touch

of a stranger, into the broad palm of the Scotchman.

Duncan Geddes was won over in an instant. He lifted the child up in his strong arms hastily and kissed him, while tears ran down his brown cheeks. Then he apologised respectfully to Lady Honoria for the liberty he had taken, as well as for having terrified her. The little boy still kept close beside him, talking gently, half to himself, in his broken, lisping manner. Geddes promised to tame him a rabbit, and they parted the best friends possible; the child looking after his tall figure as he crossed the open ground of the park.

"The little fellow has made a fast friend for himself already," I said. "There has been no accident, and the encounter may be for the best. Humble as his station is, Duncan Geddes is not a man to be despised."

"He looks half mad," said Lady Honoria, shuddering. "I wonder what made the child fancy him. So timid as he is, too, generally, with strangers!"

"Childhood's instinct is a sure guide, and this man's nature was a kindly one, until he suffered from a most bitter disappointment, which turned the 'milk of human kindness' within him to gall. He was a most sincere and devoted lover of the pretty young girl who went with you to Germany, and whose

subsequent conduct has, I fear, justified the Countess in parting with her. I believe the taunts and insinuations of her uncle, the strange old man at 'The Knowle, worked up a naturally high spirit almost to madness. No one in this part of the country can tell what became of her, after she left her home a second time."

"Oh, Charles! surely you don't think she's dead?" Lady Honoria said, energetically. "I've often thought of her since I came to myself after my own dreadful trials, and knew the strength of temptation, and how vain young creatures, such as Kate and I once were, are carried away before the wind of our own passions. Not that our case was the same; but then, maybe, she was not well taught, and, in that foreign land, with much to try her, it was hard to turn away from the one voice that spoke kindly. For I was cruel, too! I was very, very angry then, and I did not blame the Countess for sending her home. Now that poor Damian is gone," she continued, after a pause, during which her tears fell fast, "I remember only that she loved him, when they were alone, as it were, among foreigners, and he not just like others. I've often wondered, Charles, if that was the thought that pressed upon him latterly;—if his love still lasted, and was something

deeper and truer than I gave him credit for feeling. Oh, to save his life, I'd have yielded up even the pride I had in him ! I fancy we none of us understood him rightly. At all events, I would be sorry to hear of any harm befalling the poor young creature that he once cared for."

I could not tell her what she wished to know, and we walked on gravely and silently. From some expressions of which Fairfax had made use, I believed that Lord Dunleary's conduct in Portugal had not been satisfactory. It was probable that the light love he had once felt for the country maiden from The Knowle had soon ended, and given place to other equally unsuitable attachments ; but I could not venture to speak on the subject to his sister. All I knew was that he had been persuaded with difficulty to leave Cintra, where, our captain said, he had connexions that could not, for the sake of his friends, be too speedily and effectually broken.

The friendship between the keeper and the little boy was a great source of happiness to them both. Duncan Geddes's manner grew softer, and, I am sure, the Scottish lassie at home benefited by the new influence at work upon him. The child in his turn derived hitherto undreamed of pleasure from the various pets which the forester contrived

to tame and bring to the Hall for him ; and he was never tired of hearing the different traits of animal life which his new friend related for his entertainment.

In this, as in every other matter, Lady Honoria gave way to him. I often met them walking between the Hall and the Lodge ; and it was a curious sight to look in there sometimes, and see the dark-bearded man, of whom most children would have been afraid, with the frail, white-looking boy on his knee, looking eagerly in his face as he told him stories of forest life and sports.

It was good training for the infant, and a still better school for the man. Both were deriving inestimable advantage from it. The forest Lodge seemed a brighter place when set in order for the lady's frequent visits ; and the child ran about more fearlessly over its rough floor, beneath that rude thatch and the trees that overhung it, than on the polished marble pavement and under the branching cedars of his ancestral home.

CHAPTER VII.

I THOUGHT it was some sturdy tramp, when I saw, from the window, a tall stout man, in wayfaring garb, come through the garden-gate, swinging it to vigorously after him, at a very early hour in the morning. He had a stick and a sort of wallet with him, and he walked with the rolling gait of a sailor. As he drew nearer to the house, I perceived that it was my old acquaintance, Matthew Brand.

No call of duty had taken me to The Knowle since the termination of my attendance on the poor, down-hearted widow. The old dame and her son enjoyed remarkably good health, and the young family were dispersed in various directions. Though their uncle abused them heartily on all occasions, the lads were said to be likely to turn out well, and their grandmother whispered to me, when I inquired after them, that Matthew had often stinted himself to have money ready to pay their schooling and apprentice fees.

He did not look either to the right or left,

as he came up the walk, but doggedly before him, and his aspect was peculiarly crabbed. Like most sailors, he disliked prolonged pedestrian exercise, and dust and dirt were his abhorrence. His bronzed features were flushed, and he cast anchor at my door by throwing down his package with a sigh of disgust.

We had always been good friends, and I believed that the old fellow's bark was worse than his bite, if people knew how to treat him; so I asked him in at once, and desired Dinah to bring us some breakfast.

"Well, a man must be born and bred to it, to make him like travelling along these country roads! I'm sick of it before I'm well out of harbour: what's to become of me, I wonder, in mid ocean? Oh, Master Charles! why don't you holystone your decks, and keep them tidy? They're ankle deep, either in mud or dust, half the year; and a parcel of chaps idling about, and making us pay heaven knows how many shillings in the pound poor-rates, that ought to be set to work mending and watering them. I'm tired of parish business. It's that takes me away; and the old woman's mortal provoking. Can't tell, for the life of me, how to get the weather-gage of her temper, so I'm going to see the world again. Can't, for the life and

soul of me, stay any longer cooped up, like the hens with their chicks, at the farm yonder."

The man was such a strange creature, and had been a wanderer for so many years, that I thought nothing was more likely than his having wearied of his late comparatively respectable occupations. Believing, however, that his departure would grieve the old dame, I considered it my duty to remonstrate.

"Avast there, Master Charles! I never could stand preaching. It won't mend matters, and I've packed my traps for a long voyage, and must keep moving. I only wish the land journey was over. I've not fallen out with the old Missus. She's about the best of the lot that I've come across in my time, though she often angers me. They're always for keeping things close when they ought to let out, and then set to chattering like so many parrots when a man longs to clap a blister on their tongues to silence them. That poor thing that's gone—Hezekiah's widow, I mean—was a deep one! Not but what she had her good points; I won't deny it; but you wouldn't match her easily for provoking ways. They came as natural to her as meat and drink; and as for crying, which always galls me, there was no stopping her. If she'd made a friend of me, and spoken a sensible word at the right season, we would have had

that poor girl back long ago ; and belike she herself mightn't be lying in the churchyard, if she'd had her daughter to comfort her."

"Have you heard any tidings of Kate?" I said, with much interest, for the poor girl's fate was a painful mystery to me as well as to her family. "You are certainly right not to neglect the faintest indication."

"I don't know that I can rightly say I've got the end of the clue fast yet, but I'm trying to find it," said the seaman, fumbling in his pocket. "I'm not much of a scholar, but you see, Master Charles, I've been in foreign parts, and that always gives a man an advantage over folk that stop at home. There's my old mother beats me hollow over the farming matters ; knows to a fraction the price wheat should sell for, and can cast up the longest bill as easy as I'd reckon the log ; but just put a word or two in a foreign language before her, and she pulls up short, can't make out any gibberish—Lingua Franca, Dutch or Spanish, Danish or Italian, it's all one to her. She would not have let this come in my way, if she'd thought I could make any meaning out of it ; and it's just what is going to help me to the root of the matter."

He unfolded carefully, as he spoke, a scrap of thin foreign paper, on which were a few lines of a woman's writing, traced in uncertain characters.

“That’s mostly all I’ve got to guide me, but it’s her writing; and the poor maid didn’t know Portugee when she left England. It’s just something she’s copied out of a book, and the mother found it, you may be sure, and put up the scrap with her clothes, as she would have done anything else that belonged to her. I don’t blame her for that, seeing it’s but natural. I’ve sat and stared at that bit of paper myself, trying to put more meaning in it than the words would bear; and why shouldn’t her mother stow it away in her locker? All the good it did was that it told me where to look for her; and what with coaxing and scolding I got it out of my old dame that Kate’s mother went across the sea with nothing but the cover of a letter to direct her. If that foolish widow could do it, why should not I? so I’m off, to-morrow, by the packet for Lisbon; and if I never come back, I’ll thank you to break the news to the old dame at the farm. She’s the only soul on the face of the earth that’ll take the trouble to inquire whether the ship I sailed in was ever brought into port.”

“Have you procured the address that guided Kate’s mother?” I asked, while an impression which I had previously entertained became stronger. “I know Lisbon well, and can, perhaps, give you some information.”

“No, hang it! That’s why I say the widow was such a deep one. I’ve overhauled her kit, and except that bit of writing, there’s not a scrap of an old letter,—not a memorandum;—the only thing I could find was an outlandish coin or two; but that was something. The old dame swears she knows nothing, but that the widow went off after getting a letter from her daughter, and never named her after she came back, till just before she died. Here’s a nice track to push a canoe upon! Cane-brakes on one hand and mangoe-swamps on the other, with the sharks and alligators poking their heads up out of the mud, and snapping at you as you go past them. Just what one gets for meddling with these women’s affairs!—Get me out of this mess, and I’ll never speak to a petticoated jade again as long as I live. I’ve had more than enough of them!”

I felt really sorry for the man who, on such imperfect information, was undertaking a quest after the unfortunate girl who had left his house in anger; and I offered to write to our Consul, asking him to assist in his researches.

Matthew thanked me with more warmth than usual.

“You’ve often done me a good turn with that rickety old boat; and I’m not one to

forget the lad that pulled hand over hand with me at the ropes when the brig was sinking," he said, figuratively. "I'll tell you what, Master Charles! there's one or two names put down in the log-book I keep, and yours is among them;—next but one to the top, in the old sailor's journal. You're in good company there, I can tell you; and when I've got this matter that's troubling me off my mind, which I'm pretty certain of doing, we'll cast up the reckoning and see how it stands. I was a deal younger than I am now, when he that's next to a saint in my calendar,—and a good deal higher I'd rate him than some of those Popish rascals,—tried to save me from flogging, and stood up before his judges in cool blood, months after, to say I didn't deserve it, and to beard the ruffian who punished me. There were white lines in my hair, then, and I'd served my king and country half over the globe long before the youngsters that tyrannised over us put on their epaulettes and gold-laced jackets. It's enough to rile a man's spirit to think of it, and to know that brave fellow ruined himself to help us!"

A convulsive pang of emotion distorted his usually iron visage. I saw that some dire weight of wrong and injury had oppressed his spirit and hardened his character. He

got up hastily, and taking his oaken staff and his wallet, prepared to set forth.

“There’s tyrants by sea and land — sail in what waters you will, you can’t keep clear of them,” he added. “Now, that old mother of mine at the farm, hang me if she’ll stand joking! She has had her own way so long, that it won’t do to thwart her. If I want to sail across her course, I must do it with a high hand, I can tell you; for she keeps her yards braced, her guns shotted, and colours flying at the main, night and day, and she’s as ready to let fly as a revenue cutter at a smuggler’s wherry. You’ll go and see her sometimes while I am away, even if she don’t want physicking. She’ll miss me, I know, if it’s only the pleasure of contradicting me. There’s no one, now, to cross her, and that’s aggravating, after one has been used to see the place beset with girls, women, lads, and children, all running helter-skelter, pell-mell in each other’s way, making noise enough to drive you to distraction. The fruit’s ripening for nothing; — she’ll never have the heart to gather it; and those rogues of schoolboys are not there to steal it. Hang me, if I don’t think the place is curst! No one cares to stay in it.”

He turned away without bidding me good-bye, further than with a surly sort of

shrug with his shoulder; and I saw him pounding away over the dusty road as far as I could trace it. The next time my practice carried me among the hills, I recollected his wish that I should go and see his mother, whom I found, in spite of her son's alarming account of her temper, as good-humoured and hospitable as ever.

She still smiled and curtsied, and time and sorrow had left little trace on her countenance, though she spoke feelingly of the losses she had sustained. Matthew's society was one of them, and she still maintained that he meant kindly by his brother's children, and would turn out the best friend they had ever had. He was gone now across the seas to right poor Kate's memory, if, indeed, as her mother had affirmed, she was no more; or, perhaps, as the sanguine old dame prognosticated, to find her out and bring her back with him to gladden their hearts at The Knowle. She was certain, though he would not confess it, that his spirits were buoyed up with this expectation; and that, whatever poor Kate's errors and imprudences might have been, her uncle had long since forgiven her.

The Knowle was more altered than its mistress, and I scarcely wondered at Matthew's thinking that an evil destiny had fallen upon it. The old dame's taste lay more towards

the useful than the ornamental; and the pretty garden Kate had made, and which her mother looked after for her sake, now that her brothers were not there to weed it, was overrun with nettles. The cut yews had grown sadly out of shape, and wanted careful pruning. The farm-business, on the other hand, was in a very prosperous condition. Dame Brand was a careful stewardess, and I never saw the crops look better. It was the gentler features of the scene that were altered.

Our rude hills, swept by westerly sea-blasts, were too unsheltered for plants to flourish there that needed attentive culture. Kate's verbenas and fuchsias had perished, even as the delicate flower I had seen on former occasions blooming at the farm had probably withered away on a foreign soil, transplanted by a careless hand, and might be lying, with many another once-cherished English blossom, under the cypresses and willows that overshadow the English burial-ground at Lisbon.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE Medora, Captain Fairfax's ship, was expected home, and I watched with more interest than usual every vessel that passed up Channel. Our correspondence had been carried on regularly during his absence on a foreign station, until within the last few months, when, on my part, it was discontinued. I had not written to him that summer.

The English papers told him the cause of my silence, and he was too good a son not to feel for me sincerely. As soon as the duties consequent upon his ship's arrival in port were discharged, and his mother cheered by a brief but satisfactory visit, he came to see me at Moraston.

His arrival was only the more welcome from being quite unexpected. I had no time to consider how I should treat my guest, and he seemed well content to take everything as he found it. There was, indeed, very little in which I could alter my domestic arrange-

ments. Our old servants still remained with me; the primitive customs of the household were unchanged. I had a good horse or two in my stables to offer to my friend, and a fine bold country, quite new to him, lay around us. In other respects, my secluded but much-occupied life might seem little calculated to afford him amusement.

Captain Fairfax, nevertheless, appeared satisfied with my small establishment, and disposed to make himself pleasantly at home. He had often promised to visit me, but had never been able to afford the time. Now that I was living alone, with spirits much depressed by recent trials, his friendship was a boon to me that I could scarcely prize too highly. His warm sympathy and cordial participation in my cause for mourning lessened the heavy pressure of grief.

The first morning we were together, Lady Honoria's name was not mentioned by either of us. I observed that my companion looked with interest at the Earl's mansion, as he saw it to the greatest possible advantage from the bridge that crossed the stream near the village. The noble white Palladian front, with its stately colonnade,—the groves of fine trees, with, here and there, a statue gleaming forth among them,—the smooth lawn, sloping down to the river,—above all, the splendid group

of cedars to the right of the Hall, with the evening light now glowing upon their gnarled stems, and casting their broad tops into strong relief, was a view well worth the long pause my friend made to admire it. He walked on in silence, however, without asking a single question. I could not guess from his manner whether he knew that the Great House was at present inhabited.

Though our ride, that afternoon, was quite in an opposite direction, it afforded us frequent views of the Earl's domain. From every high hill in the country, the cedars were a prominent object. Their tops formed a landmark visible for many miles—one dark spot of unfading verdure. Now, indeed, they were less conspicuous than when the woods were bare, but still the tint of the foliage and the form of the trees were so peculiar that they immediately attracted attention. Either laden with snow, which during the last severe winter had fallen and rested upon them so heavily that many of the branches were broken, or in storms which had scathed the group more than once, so that the villagers always prognosticated, when the lightning was fierce in the sky, that the cedars would be smitten, or, as now, in sunshine and fine weather, these distinguishing features of our home landscape were of course under every

aspect familiar to me. Fairfax recognised them almost immediately.

“I did not think,” he said, “we were so near home. That is the fine group of cedars you showed me yesterday in Lord St. Lo’s park. The house must be beyond that dark grove of beeches. It is a much finer place than I expected.”

“You are an agreeable person to lionise,” I said, “and have not some exaggerated, preconceived notions of your own, which are, each moment, by their overthrow, causing you disappointment. Who could suppose, from the admiration you have bestowed on our downs to-day, that you have rambled over the sierras of the Alpuxarras lately? and no doubt you have looked before now upon the living cedars of Lebanon. What must ours appear in comparison?”

“Very sightly monsters, I assure you,” replied Fairfax, laughing. “A man may see the glories of Mount Lebanon, and recollect them, too, without losing his interest in the dales and hills of England. Besides, our rural landscapes have associations scarcely less sacred than those which hang about the convents and crags of Carmel. I will answer for it, Charles, you would look back with fondness to your own cedars, if you stood at the base of those which remind us of the building

of the Temple. For my part, I have always had a strong desire to see what should have been poor Dunleary's property. Does any one look after his sister's rights? From all I hear, Lord St. Lo is, less than ever, a man to be trusted. He has sunk into second childhood, and leaves everything to the management of the Countess. She is governed in her turn by Colonel O'Malley, whom, it is said, she intends to marry when her present husband is laid in his grave."

I was shocked at this communication, and did not immediately answer. Fairfax went on gravely.

"On my way home, I fell in with your friend, Mr. Salcombe, the officer who got into a scrape about letting his men and some of the coast-guard put off in boats to help the crew of an American vessel. He was in command of the Shamrock cutter, and lost it, in consequence of being supposed to have shown unbecoming rashness. It was after the Retribution left Dunleary, but I believe he was hardly used. Being in want of employment, he accepted a proposal of Colonel O'Malley's that he should take the command of his yacht. Salcombe had no idea what a gay party he was to have in charge; and says he was not at all pleased when Lady St. Lo and the Earl, with a whole paraphernalia of valets, lady's-

maids, and finery came on board. They had rough weather, and narrowly escaped perishing of sea-sickness in the Bay of Biscay; yet they persisted in cruising about all the autumn, visited several of the French and Spanish ports, and weathered more than one tempest, which must have tried my lady's equanimity and ruffled her fine plumage. Your fiery friend, the lieutenant, had numerous quarrels with the Colonel, who is totally ignorant of navigation. At last, the Countess became extremely ill, and kept her cabin. O'Malley was probably tired of his guests, and anxious to land them. He insisted upon bringing the yacht into the harbour at Cherbourg, in such a fog that the attempt must have perilled all their lives. Salcombe remonstrated, peaceably at first, and then fairly threatened to put the military hero under arrest. I believe he would have clapped him under hatches or in irons, but the Colonel sulkily gave way, time enough to save his dignity. Salcombe landed them all safely, the next morning, and left them."

I could not help laughing.

"That is just like Salcombe," I said. "He would not stand on ceremony, either with her ladyship or the Colonel; but their lives were safe, as far as good seamanship could secure them, while he had the command of the vessel.

Do you know what has become of him now?"

"I hope he is on the road to better fortune," said Fairfax. "What I saw of him pleased me so much that I thought it a thousand pities he should be lost to the service, and starving on his miserable half-pay at a foreign port with his wife and children. Such interest as I possess has been used to enforce attention to his claims. The case has been looked into again, and he is fully exonerated from blame in the affair off the Island of Raghery. One of the sailors belonging to his cutter, who was supposed to be lost, has made his way back to England, and says he was picked up by the American vessel, which was short of hands, and glad to procure the assistance of British seamen. His evidence proves that the boat was lost in consequence of an accident which no mortal could control, and that Salcombe showed no more than a brave man's readiness to go to the aid of the vessel in distress. He has just had his rank given him as Commander in the Navy, and I hope soon to see that he is appointed to a ship."

"I am heartily glad to hear it," I said. "I myself can bear witness, if needful, that his gallantry was tempered with discretion. Was the sailor you mention the only one saved?—or did you hear that any other of the

fine fellows who went off to the ship had the good luck to escape drowning?"

"I have told you all I know about the matter. The boat was struck by lightning, and one man, — not more, I think, — held on by a spar till the Yankees drew him on board. They made sail, and carried him away with them, instead of landing him, as he wanted, on the coast, where he might regain the cutter. Very advantageous offers were made, the man avers, to induce him to enter the American merchant-service; but he was disgusted with the cruelties he saw practised during the voyage, and on the return of the brig to New Orleans preferred working his passage back to England."

We rode home in almost unbroken silence. Fairfax's narrative had carried my thoughts back to a day which I had never forgotten. The storm seemed to rage and roar in my ears now, as it had done then, when the boat went down before our eyes, yet in such darkness that none of us could see it. Might not another of those dauntless men have escaped with life?

A great change took place in the manner of my guest, when, as we sat together after dinner, a casual expression of mine informed him that Lady Honoria St. Lo was staying at The Cedars.

“ I do not think, Charles, even friendship for you would have brought me here,” he said, gloomily, “ if I had known she was to be so near us.”

He changed the subject; but, only a few moments afterwards, reverted to it again.

“ What am I to do?” he said. “ It was my wish, on coming here, to talk to you about her. I am afraid her interests are not in safe hands; but, after what passed at Naples, I cannot bear to see her. Yet here, to be within a stone’s throw of the gates of her dwelling,—perhaps to see her by some chance. Indeed, Frankland, I think I must leave you.”

“ There is not the slightest occasion,” I said. “ Lady Honoria never goes beyond the precincts of the park. Nothing can be easier than to avoid her, if, indeed, you wish it; but why should you dread meeting her? In some respects, she is changed, but not in the manner you led me to expect. It must have been the dreadful fever she suffered from at Dunleary which reduced her for a time to the sad condition you described. She is absorbed, now, in the care of the Countess’s infant son, a little patient of mine, whom I must visit to-morrow. Never have I seen her so gentle and interesting; and, instead of the apathy you dread to witness, her heart is full of soft and warm

emotions. She is the tenderest nurse, the fondest sister imaginable."

Fairfax listened to me incredulously.

"It must have been more than grief for a brother, however deep that might be, which changed her so fearfully. If I had not seen it myself, I could not have credited it. I have disregarded taunts — insinuations — which, if another woman had been the object of such sarcasm, would have alienated me from her for ever; but then they were uttered by an enemy. At Naples there was no delusion, no disguise; all was open and above board. There might, indeed, be too much softness in the Countess's lamentations — a little of the crocodile in the tears she affected to shed; but, hard as she was, such a sight might even have made her weep, — might have wrung tears from a stone. I made up my mind, then, never to see Lady Honoria again."

"Be it so, then," I answered; for, indeed, I thought it might be better, on his account, that they should not meet. "I will visit The Cedars alone. It is not even necessary that I should mention your name there to-morrow; and Lady Honoria has so little intercourse with the world that she will not otherwise hear it. Still, I see no reason why you should leave Moraston."

Fairfax got up, and, walking to the win-

dow, gazed over the blind at the dark trees of the park.

“ I am more of a boy than you are, Charles ; though, I believe, I am half a dozen years older. Of this I am sure, that if I stay over to-morrow, I shall present myself with you at The Cedars.”

“ Come with me, then, by all means,” I answered. “ Lady Honoria, I am certain, will not refuse to welcome so true a friend of her brother’s ; though her gates are closed in general to all but me.”

“ It certainly is difficult to see how I am ever to be of use to her, if I do not conquer this reluctance about meeting,” said Fairfax, less candidly, and reddening as he re-seated himself. “ I most sincerely wish to befriend her, and I do not understand the Countess’s motives for parading her before the world, when she was in that state of coma,—what is it you call it ?—that looked so like madness. Has it never occurred to you how very strongly it is that woman’s interest to get rid of all the children on whom Lord St. Lo’s English property is settled ? The boys are both dead, and now only Lady Honoria is left. To prevent her marrying, Lady St. Lo would not scruple to destroy every chance of happiness for her daughter-in-law. She did not hesitate about tampering with her reputation when I was at

Dunleary, but I would not listen to her. After all, our own eyes are not always to be trusted. I might be under the influence of her sophistries at Naples. You have made me ashamed of my cowardice, Frankland. Happen what may, I will not shun Lady Honoria. Once again, we will see her together."

CHAPTER IX.

LADY HONORIA, since she came to 'The Cedars,' had lived in such complete seclusion, that I did not think it right to take Fairfax to the Hall without permission. Independently of her wish to exclude ordinary visitors, I had very little doubt that the interview would agitate her, and I was anxious to afford her time for preparation. He was unusually nervous as the moment drew near for receiving her answer to the note I had written to her; but I could perceive that a refusal on her part would have occasioned him the bitterest mortification.

Though I do not regard a person's handwriting as an infallible index to character, there was something in every line I ever saw penned by Lady Honoria St. Lo which told me more than the written words implied to others. My father had taken great pains to improve her penmanship, which was quite unformed when she first came to Moraston.

It was now fair and firm, but with a slight dash of her natural impetuosity in the quick flow of the writing. Not a line was marred by dashes or breaks; the softly-tinted, delicate foreign paper bore the neat indications of a lady's folding; yet, in spite of careful and elegant diction, there were to me marks of strong inward emotion in the reply she sent me.

I do not think Fairfax shared this impression. There was nothing to prevent my showing him Lady Honoria's kind but very grave expression of a wish to see him; and when I observed how impatiently he was looking at it across the breakfast-table, I gave the note into his hands. I am sure he thought it coldly worded; his face clouded over; but he only said he should be ready at the time named, and strolled off into the garden.

One thing I particularly noticed. Lady Honoria made no reference whatever to having seen him at Naples. Her few simple, melancholy words distinctly implied that their last meeting had been at Dunleary. She could not refuse to see one who had parted from her at the same time with her poor brother; though she confessed that she was grateful to me for giving her a few hours to prepare for what must remind her so painfully of him

from whom that severance was for all time to come in this world.

The latest hour which could well be fixed for a morning visit was appointed. I am certain that she unspeakably dreaded its arrival. Captain Fairfax was not more self-possessed. He lingered over the short walk, and the hour had passed by several minutes when we reached The Cedars. Lady Honoria was in the small drawing-room on the ground floor, that looked out into the flower-garden, waiting for us.

Her manner was very calm and dignified, yet it did not lack kindness. Captain Fairfax was outwardly the most agitated, but, underneath her quiet exterior there were deep tides of emotion struggling. The little child was with her, and served, as is often the case, as a medium for opening the conversation.

There were some gold and silver fish in a large marble bason from which a fountain welled up in front of the windows; and the boy had been feeding them. These silent favourites were a great amusement to him, and he took me with him to see how they crowded to the surface of the shallow water to get the crumbs of cake he threw to them. As they turned themselves quickly over, or shot through the tiny waves, their bright scales glittered in the low evening sunlight that shone warmly over the terrace.

Lady Honoria had followed the child out immediately. I think Fairfax was in hopes that they might have a moment's private conversation, but she did not grant him the opportunity. She was, or seemed to be, almost as intent on watching the fish as the child; and when his quiet but mirthful laugh at their gambols met her ear, her pale, and till then sad-looking, face flushed with pleasure.

"It's not to be doubted he's better," she said, looking at me to confirm her opinion, though she announced it so positively. "You have not been here these three days, Mr. Frankland, and must see the change. Oh, how pleasant it is to hear him laugh and speak plainly!" Then, checking herself and turning to her guest, she said, "you'll forgive me, Captain Fairfax; but the child has been ill, and he's the only comfort I have left."

Her beautiful eyes filled with tears. Fairfax drew nearer to her, without looking at the boy, of whom from the first he had not seemed disposed to take much notice. As they stood beside each other under the colonnade, his tall, manly figure full of vigour, his face embellished by tender, generous emotion, its handsome features bespeaking sincerity and truth, as well as that cultivation of intellect more rarely to be found in men of his profession; her bending, willowy form, with its listless, melancholy

grace, the fair ringlets braided back under a soft light covering of lace, which hung in long lappets over her neck and falling shoulders,—her trembling fingers clinging with a tenacity of grasp, that told me how greatly she needed support, to the marble pillar nearest to her,—the one seemed well adapted to give, the other to receive, protection and fostering care. Lady Honoria, however, soon moved away from him.

“It’s a lovely evening,” she said, simply. “Your friend will like to see the gardens, Charles. They’re thought to be in great beauty.”

I scarcely know what we talked about as we moved on, keeping together, through the masses of beautiful flowers and choice plants. The gardens were still kept up, and shown on a certain day of the week to strangers. They looked very tranquil and secluded now, and Lady Honoria seemed to enjoy showing them to us. The little boy held her hand and walked demurely by her side.

Both she and Fairfax, I thought, avoided anything like confidential conversation. His transient impulse to address her in a more intimate fashion had passed: we talked as strangers might have done, and on the subjects farthest from our thoughts. It was not till we had finished our tour of the gardens, and

while I was speaking to the child, that I heard Lady Honoria say with effort,—

“I'm not able to thank and bless you for all you did for poor Damian. Charles Frankland told me what a friend you were to him. I named you in my prayers ever after. I mean,” she continued, turning deadly pale, “since I remembered what you had done for him. There was a time when I could not think or pray, but I'm better now :—that's passed over,” she said, hurriedly, in answer to some low-breathed words of his which did not reach me. “It's best not to call it to mind.”

“Will you let me tell you now,—since you have yourself approached the subject,—that poor Dunleary always thought of you with the greatest affection?” said Fairfax, closely observing her while he spoke. “He was most anxious to have seen you. I am convinced that he would then have told you all that weighed upon his mind.”

Lady Honoria trembled like a leaf.

“Oh, what is it you mean?” she said; “you would not say this if the poor, poor boy had not troubled sadly about me. Was there anything he wanted me to do for him? Don't fear to name it.”

“Yes,” said Fairfax; “I think your brother greatly desired to place in you the strongest mark of confidence a man can re-

pose in any person. I have long sought and desired to tell you his last request, but circumstances——” he hesitated——“your deep grief, made me afraid. The commission must be a painful one to you.”

Lady Honoria glanced anxiously at me.

“Come nearer, Charles; don’t fear to hear what Damian’s friend is telling me. I’ve no secrets from you about him. Give me your arm to lean upon while I listen. Now, sir,” she said, turning her white face towards Fairfax, “what was the duty laid upon me, with his dying breath, by my poor brother?”

Fairfax was greatly affected. It was with difficulty that he answered her:—

“I believe,” he said, “that Lord Dunleary’s charge related to one with whose history you are acquainted. His words were:—‘I’ve no one to look to but Honor for kindness. Her generous heart will teach her what to do.’ And then he raised himself up and said, very earnestly:—‘Bid her—my sister—as she loved me, to be a friend, when I am gone, to my poor Kate!’”

I felt the arm leaning on mine press more heavily, and a deep, gasping sob escaped from the poor girl’s lips. Dipping my hand in the fountain, I threw the cold water in her face, and bathed her temples. The little boy, who had been looking at the fish, came up and

kissed her fondly. He was frightened at the coldness of her cheek as he touched it, and cried bitterly. Fairfax put him aside rather roughly.

“The child will make her worse! Where is his nurse? Can we not send him away?”

Lady Honoria, meanwhile, had revived. The little clasping hands, that would not be unloosed, the childish weeping, roused her from the faintness that was threatening her. She held the boy fast, and bending her face down to him, wept freely. As her tears fell, his dried up; and he tried, by little infantine caresses, to soothe her.

“I should have known this sooner!” she said. “Oh! why was I not told it? Where is poor Kate now? Maybe it’s too late to help her; and yet he, poor Damian, loved her to the last!”

Fairfax was perplexed how to account for the delay.

“There were reasons which inclined me to believe that your brother’s anxiety related to a person whom, at the time of his death, he had left behind him at Cintra. When I found that you were too ill to receive his message, I sought for her. I directed that inquiries should be made at the place where I thought it most likely she would be found, but it was in vain. The summer

lodging on the heights, about which Dunleary often lingered before he left Lisbon so unwillingly, was tenanted by an English family. Nothing could be learned of its former occupant. She had quitted it upon hearing of his death, and was gone no one knew whither."

Lady Honoria buried her face in her hands.

"Poor, ill-fated girl!" she said. "I will not know rest, day or night, till I hear what has befallen you. The last care poor Dunleary had!—how he must have loved her!"

Fairfax looked at her anxiously.

"You will always hate me," he said, "for having given you so much pain, but it could not be avoided. Many persons may say that I ought to have shunned this subject, but to me it seems that the trust was a sacred one. You might know more than I did of the object of your brother's attachment, which, it is evident, was not the light fancy of a boy. It might be in your power to fulfil his last wishes; and I felt certain that, whatever may have been his errors, they would at your hands meet with indulgence. Is it not so, Lady Honoria? Can you forgive me for causing you all this bitter suffering?"

"You were quite right," she said; "I can't thank you just now as I ought, but I feel it deeply. Who should know what was

in my brother's heart but me? I only wish I'd read it sooner. Perhaps he wouldn't be lying in the cold grave now, if I had guessed what he was feeling. Oh, the bitterness of sorrow he must have borne when he knew that he must die, and saw the blue waves flowing between him and the girl who had left her home to follow him! I dare not blame him! There's many an excuse to be made for those that have never been properly guided; and he'd less training even than I—Irish children, running wild over bog and mountain like gipsies, and then, in foreign countries, scarcely ever taught to say a prayer, save those I learned to breathe at Moraston. There was one I loved fondly, who was more a father to me than my own parent, and taught me precepts I've not forgotten nor strayed from; but poor Dunleary never knew him."

She was so much agitated that we both prepared to take leave. "I'd be better alone for awhile, but come and see me to-morrow," she said, faintly; "I'll be able to thank you, then, and to try if we can think of any way of helping poor Kate. Charles knows who she was, and her friends; he's kind to them still, I dare say, and won't forget her."

I told her that the old man, Kate's uncle, had lately called to see me. He had obtained an indication of her having at one time resided

in Portugal, and I had undertaken to write for him a strong recommendation to the British Consul at Lisbon. This I had done, strengthening it with such information as might aid him in his pursuit, which, I was certain, would be carried on with characteristic energy.

Lady Honoria thanked me warmly. We did not remain longer; and, agitated as she was, I think her manner of parting from him pleased Fairfax better than his reception. He talked of her all the way home, saying that he thought her infinitely more lovely than ever, and was perfectly convinced that I was right in considering the strange state of apathy in which she had been plunged at Naples to be the result of physical weakness, not a sign of mental alienation. His wise resolution of avoiding her was quite forgotten, and he no longer spoke of leaving Moraston, but laid plans such as plainly showed that the place contained a treasure, which he was firmly resolved not to lose the present favourable opportunity of once more trying to win.

CHAPTER X.

My quiet home would, under other circumstances, have presented few attractions to a man holding Captain Fairfax's position in society. Though he had now for some years honoured me with his friendship, I always felt that there was a difference in rank between us; not, indeed, what had formerly existed when I sailed with him as surgeon in the *Retribution*, but still a very obvious separation. There was no family residing in Moraston to whom I chose to introduce him; and he must have passed many lonely, uninteresting hours during the fortnight his visit lasted.

My own professional duties could not be put aside, and he had not the resource, in my absence, of spending his time at The Cedars. Those park-gates must have presented a singular temptation, but he did not venture to pass through them alone, and I would not often invite him to accompany me. Lady Honoria led so secluded a life, and the exception

she made in favour of the friend who had witnessed her brother's last moments so evidently cost her a struggle, that Fairfax respected her scruples.

When his feelings were so deeply interested, it could not but prove a trial to a man of his straightforward character to wait on, day after day, with little encouragement to linger in Lady Honoria's manner of receiving his unfrequent visits. Even when he saw her, it was not always possible to command her attention. The little ailing child was suffering more than usual from the nervous malady which a low, damp situation like that of The Cedars, at the season of the fall of the leaf, was calculated to increase. It was now the beginning of September, and, all through the early part of the day, the heat was intense. In the afternoon, the wind rose and tempered the atmosphere; but it settled again in damp sultry mist over the woodlands as night drew on.

It often gave me extreme anxiety to see how completely Lady Honoria's thoughts were centered in the delicate infant of whom she had the charge. Important as human life must always appear to a reflective mind, the little creature's fragile health became a subject of yet more intense study to me, as I grew convinced that his sister's future fate depended

on the slender chance of rearing the boy to man's estate. Though never weary of attending upon him, ministering to his weakness, or exerting herself for his amusement, her health was very uncertain, and there was a strong and touching resemblance between the natures of the woman and the child. Half her indisposition was the result of sympathy.

"What makes her so fond of that puny boy, Frankland?" said Fairfax, one day, when we were riding through the park. "She used never to appear to care for Lady St. Lo's children. At present, even while speaking or seeming to listen, she is looking to see whether he is safe, not falling into the water, nor in the way of some possibly-existing monster. How ridiculous women are about children, when, after all, a few years hence, whether she likes it or not, he must brave the chances of a thousand accidents! Can you account for her infatuation?"

My answer, whatever it might have been, did not come quickly enough to satisfy his impatience.

"I do not think the matter is any plainer to you than to me," he went on. "Why, the boy's own mother could not be more anxious about him. She will not ride or drive, because his delicate limbs cannot bear shaking, and she walks at a snail's pace to please him. If

the child runs, as he can do very well, she turns pale ; if he stops suddenly, she flushes crimson. I could enter into her feelings, if it were her own brother, as she has lost Damian and Adolphus ; but that tigerish Countess's brood have no such claim upon her affections."

"You will not be in favour with Lady Honoria, if you manifest your sentiments as plainly as you have done of late," I said. "The only present way to her heart, depend upon it, is through kindness and love to that child."

"Then I must leave it to others," said Fairfax, harshly. "Five years I have waited already, and I seem rather farther from the goal than at first. Not very encouraging, certainly ! Still, if I thought there was a prospect of reaching it at last, I would not mind spending another ten in her service."

I did not like to encourage him, and yet I knew not that there was, now, any insuperable barrier in his path. "Be guided by your own judgment," I said : "I do not recommend you to follow mine. I am only sure of one thing, which is, that Lady Honoria—though, if her mind were not very sadly pre-occupied, she must have observed it—does not perceive your devotion."

"You are right, Frankland. She actually thinks of nothing but that boy. Can you

wonder that I am jealous? Well! patience must be my motto. Women do not weep for a brother for ever. Look at her! see how young and beautiful she is! You do not mean that such a creature was sent into the world for nothing better and nobler than to mourn over the untimely fate of those youths,—neither of them, as far as I know, worthy of such imperishable sorrow? Let us ride over to yonder white-walled town in the hollow, and see if it will afford us a toy-shop. I suppose I must profit by your wise counsel, though you bestow it so charily, and try to please her through the child.”

One day, when my friend and I were returning from shooting, we passed close by the Forester's Lodge, intending to leave there the game we had killed, in order that it might be sent up to the Hall. At a little distance from the cottage, and set in the midst of a dark mass of foliage, lay one of the lakes or ponds which diversified the park. It was so surrounded by trees, that neither sunshine nor wind could reach the surface of the water, which rested deep and still in almost perpetual shadow and tranquillity. Some old traditions hung about the place, and gave it an evil name; but Duncan Geddes set little store by such idle talk, and, though superstitious enough in his own fashion, did not care for the report that the spot was haunted.

One of the first Lady St. Lo's ancestors, it was said, had here seen the hope of his old age, his eldest and only surviving son, perish before his eyes, without being able to render him assistance. The boy had plunged into the pool, tempted by its shade and coolness, in the midst of the burning heat of summer, and had been seized with cramp. The banks were lined with a strong, fibrous weed, in which, as he struggled, his limbs became entangled, and he sank into the depths of the dark, ice-cold water; while the old man, who could not swim, ran, madly shrieking, to the dwelling near at hand for assistance, which came too late to avail him. I have certainly heard many an eerie sound, at fall of eve, in that lone nook of the forest; and the Scottish lass who kept Geddes's homestead in order would not venture out after the first shadows of night fell over the thicket; but it was more likely to be the hooting of the owls and the shrill cry of the night-hawk that broke the silence, than the wail of the drowning boy and the scream of the distracted parent.

This dismal legend had never, I am certain, reached Lady Honoria's ear, or we should not have found her sitting placidly under the shadow of the waving bushes, watching Adolphus and the tall forester, who was launching for him a little miniature skiff on the broad, smooth surface of the pool. The child

was quite happy and safe enough, apparently, under the care of his stalwart protector; but some boyish impression, which had lingered about me since the day when the story was told to me by the former keeper, in the gathering dusk of evening, made me dislike seeing him playing on the brink of the dark, deep water. I told Geddes to be careful, and came back, after speaking to Lady Honoria, to enforce the charge by my presence. Fairfax, meanwhile, less impressed by the ghastly chronicle I had just imparted to him, remained by her side.

I could see, stretching out under the water, about half a foot below the surface, long branching shoots of the weed which flourished in it so abundantly. In the dark holes beneath the bank, its branches were thick and strong, powerful enough to make me imagine that their coil might have dragged down the poor youth to destruction; while, farther out from the land, the tangled shoots were like wreaths of fine dark sea-weed.

The child's merry laugh dispelled these gloomy fancies. The skiff sailed well. Its light sail needed but the faint sigh of the breeze, which passed over the water without ruffling it, to impel it onward faster than he could follow it.

I heard Lady Honoria say,—“What makes Charles Frankland look so anxious? Is it the

water that he's afraid of? But then it's not the sea, only a quiet pool in the middle of the woods, with green banks sloping down to it. Surely, there's no danger?"

Fairfax's voice, in reassuring tones, was clearly audible across the strip of water that separated us; yet still I kept my eyes fixed upon the child.

"I don't like to mar his pleasure," she said, softly; "it's but little he has of it, the darling! and I'm not so timid when that brave, tall man is watching over him. The child gathers courage from his eye, and it does him good to be playing in the greenwood, with the cool shade about him. It's your gift that delights him so to-day. He never had a plaything he liked better."

Fairfax's voice dropped lower. I think he was trying to win her attention to another subject, but, whatever he might be speaking of, her eyes followed the child, and the white-sailed, fairy-like boat skimming over the pond. I do not know whether it was a current of wind or the treacherous twisting weed that caught it, but suddenly the silvery sail shivered, the tiny wherry whirled rapidly round, and began to fill with water. Duncan Geddes, who was as intent as the child upon his plaything, plunged knee-deep into the pond to rescue the flimsy toy from destruction. As

he let go the little boy's hand, Adolphus, excited at beholding his pretty vessel sinking before his eyes, made an incautious step on the slippery, shelving slope of the bank, and fell headlong into the water.

Except from the wetting, there was little or no danger. I was close at hand; Fairfax at but the distance of twenty paces; both of us, if necessary, were excellent swimmers. It was not as when, for want of efficient aid, the poor youth had been sucked into the cold embrace of death. Before we could either of us stir, Duncan Geddes had saved the child. His pretty frock had hardly been soaked through, nor his fine hair uncurled; and he was very little frightened;—the accident had been simultaneous with the rescue, but the effect upon Lady Honoria was more lasting.

She had seen the child miss his footing, but not a sound escaped her. Mute, agonised, her pale lips compressed and quivering,—even when the forester carried him straight up the bank, and showed her that he was unhurt and smiling,—she did not speak. The shock she had sustained was so great that it left her dumb and tearless.

Though silent, she occupied herself with the child, unfastening with her small, trembling hand the strings of his wet jacket and frock, and wrapping him in a little cloak that

lay on the grass, ready in case they stayed late enough for him to suffer from the chilliness of the evening. Fairfax, deceived by her apparent calmness, spoke to her, and strove to assist; but I saw his face change when she turned hers towards him. Its mute distress was, indeed, enough to agitate him, especially if he perceived, as I did, that she literally could not answer him. Without another word, but imperiously, he took from her the little fellow whom, though he clung to her, she had not power to lift, and placed him in my arms. Thus burdened, I followed them slowly. Lady Honoria had not resisted his desire that she should lean upon him, but every moment she looked back at me and my charge.

Duncan Geddes, who had not forgotten to rescue the little boat, walked by my side, showing it to the child. As he lay with his fair hair flowing over my shoulder, looking up in the man's dark face, I saw it become suddenly pale with emotion.

"Where got ye that bright blink of the e'e, bairnie? The bonnie leddy hasn't it, though she's wondrous like ye; but God's angels in heaven, if I ever win up there, will greet me wi' sic a smile!"

He sighed heavily, and marched on in silence. Meanwhile Fairfax, having represented to Lady Honoria that the boy could

not possibly have sustained any injury, was becoming impatient. His step slackened as we approached The Cedars, and he made me a sign to carry the child in-doors at once. As I passed, I heard him say to his companion,—

“Still silent! If you would not have me hate the child, be reasonable! Speak, and I will be his friend through life.”

I shall not easily forget the expression of Lady Honoria's countenance as she drew her arm away from him, and joined me. Fairfax was irresistibly awed by it. I was going to speak for her, but the nervous affection wore off as she struggled against it, and she said, with an effort,—

“There's a spell laid upon me that I can't shake off, when danger threatens him. Now I can speak and thank you.”

She took Duncan's brown, rough hand in both of hers. “The child loved you before,” she said, solemnly, “and I now. The blessing of a woman's heart be upon you for saving my darling! If the waters had closed over him too, I'd soon have followed him.”

Duncan Geddes received the lady's thanks respectfully, but with his usual independent aspect.

“I'd do more than sic a trifle for the little master;—my shoon's scarce wetted. The

bairns are a precious gift from the Lord. His providence watches over them."

He walked away as he spoke, and I carried the child into the hall, and placed him in the arms of the Italian servant appointed by Lady St. Lo to attend especially upon him.

Though the child had been only for a few minutes in his wet clothes, he was feverish all the early part of the night. I did not leave him, but Fairfax returned at once to my house, carrying a note desiring my assistant to send such simple remedies as were requisite for him. His constitution was so delicate that it was difficult to treat the most trifling ailment. Stimulants were too exciting, while a lowering system wasted his strength so rapidly that I was almost afraid to enforce it. Lady Honoria never left him; and he fell asleep at last in her arms, scarcely more white and waxen, in his infantine beauty, than herself.

CHAPTER XI.

“CAPTAIN SALCOMBE will not thank me for interfering with his affairs,” said Fairfax, handing a letter over to me, the next morning. “He is appointed to the *Alacrity*, a regular old Government tub, which is about to sail with troops for the Cape. The Caffre war will be over long before she gets there, if she is lucky enough to keep afloat. Any company or private individual to whom she might have belonged would have condemned this unlucky craft long ago as not sea-worthy; and here is one of the finest regiments in the service about to be sent out in her. Halsted writes as if he thought I should be gratified with the result of his exertions, and the prompt attention paid to my recommendation. So much for keeping a promise to the letter and breaking it in the spirit! I do not believe a worse thing could have happened to your friend.”

“He will not think so,” I said. “Harry Salcombe has been fuming, like a caged lion,

within the narrow bounds of the coast-guard stations ; running his head against every stone wall in Ireland, and setting at nought rules and regulations, in his honest zeal to get matters righted, which it is the interest of those in authority to overlook. He would go to sea, to-morrow, in a punt or a washing-tub, to escape from the vexations which have tried his temper on shore ; and would thank you with all his honest heart for this appointment, if he knew that you had any share in procuring it for him. Let me do so in his name."

" Well, I am glad you think he will like it, and I wish him well through the voyage. He will not get the Alacrity out of the Channel without a break-down," said Fairfax, laughing. " From what he told me when we met, he has had enough of the land-service ; but I wish they had given him a better ship. He does not seem to be a particularly lucky fellow."

" I should like to see him before he starts," I said ; " but it would be almost impossible for me to leave home at this moment. That poor little boy at The Cedars has had a bad night, and Lady Honoria is miserable about him. If this were not the case, I would have tried to get half an hour's conversation with Salcombe about the man belonging to his cutter, who put off with other brave fellows to help the

crew of the American vessel in distress off Raghery."

"You had better let me be your deputy," said Fairfax, carelessly, while, at the same time, a glow mounted to his face. "I shall be in London myself in a day or two. As it is, I have trespassed unwarrantably on your hospitality, and I shall be delighted to be of use to you. What is it you wish me to inquire?"

"I want to know every particular which has transpired respecting the loss of the coast-guard boat belonging to the station on the Islands, and the name of any person saved out of her crew, or likely by any possibility to have escaped. One man, you tell me, was picked up by the American ship. He may have some details to give concerning the fate of the others. My letters to-day are from the part of Ireland where the friends of some of those poor fellows, who were all supposed to have perished, reside; and the return to England of one out of their number has revived the anxieties of all connected with the rest."

"I will not fail to procure you every information. Salcombe will most likely know something about the man whose report has done him such good service. At all events, it will not be difficult to trace him out. Since you have this commission for me to execute, I may as well fix my departure for to-morrow."

Much as I liked Captain Fairfax, I could not press him to prolong his visit. It was no idle matter to trifle with feelings as strong as I believed his to be.

“I know what you are thinking about, Frankland,” he said; “and I am quite as well aware as yourself that the sooner I leave this place the better. Yesterday, for the first time, I felt that dread certainty of ultimate disappointment which makes it useless for me to linger. Lady Honoria cares for nothing at present but the child, whose danger, slight as it was, almost reduced her to the state in which I saw her at Naples. That was a moment of anguish which I do not desire to endure again uselessly. I only wish it had not recalled to me a yet more painful idea, and that, connected with the sharp pang I then felt, there did not return to my memory half-forgotten words—despised taunts—which I still refuse to believe, and of which I then did not desire an explanation. Yet, however calumnious might be those insinuations, in their full extent, I do so far credit them, as to perceive that Lady Honoria is totally insensible to my love. Now, even as I felt it to be at Dunleary,—though I will not account for it as others, her enemies, have done,—she is living apart from us all, in an ideal world of her own. Her thoughts, her fears, her wishes, are alike un-

fathomable ; but, most certainly, they bear no reference to anything past or future in which my feelings have a part."

He rose from the table as he spoke, and, going to the window, stood moodily gazing at the trees in Lord St. Lo's park.

"It is the Earl's interest, and still more that of his wife," he presently continued, "to keep his eldest daughter unmarried. This estate—the only part of his property which retains its value—is settled upon the children of his first wife. Lady Honoria is the only one left ; and the strange eccentricity which undoubtedly has marked her conduct gives a hold to her step-mother which Lady St. Lo will not shrink from abusing. I have no doubt that the wish to deter me from making her my wife induced the Countess, when she first perceived my devotion to her step-daughter, to impart the blackest colouring to circumstances that might have received a milder interpretation. The same fatal obstinacy, she declared, which had cost Adolphus his life, and thrown so dark a gloom over Damian, when his misguided inclinations were thwarted, as to impair his intellect, made their sister maintain, in defiance of parental authority, a dangerous and discreditable connexion. Some early infatuation may have closed Lady Honoria's heart against me. Whatever image filled it at

Dunleary is now replaced by the child whom she has made her idol. If he is ill, all her thoughts will be devoted to him. She will not even miss me."

"You are right," I said, "so far as that the most prudent course you can adopt is to leave this neighbourhood. Lady Honoria's whole heart is wrapped up in this delicate boy. Her life depends, I am certain, on his recovery."

Fairfax looked at me with surprise.

"Can you tell me that this is natural? Why should she so wildly worship the child of the woman from whose persecutions she has all her life suffered, — whom she believes to have been the cause of the untimely death of both her brothers? I have heard the bitterest words pass her lips respecting the cruelties by which their step-mother deprived those youths of the brightness and sanctity of home-love, and threw them, unguarded by principle, on the world. Whether right or wrong, her prejudice seemed invincible. What has overcome it thus completely?"

"You ask me questions I cannot answer," I replied, after a pause. "Time may have taught Lady Honoria to judge more leniently. You, yourself, told me that, during her long illness, Lady St. Lo treated her kindly; and she has placed her child, the object of her

step-daughter's warm attachment, in her hands. You would not wish her to neglect such a charge."

As we walked up to The Cedars together, in the afternoon,—Captain Fairfax having expressed a wish to accompany me and inquire after Lady Honoria and the little boy,—I noticed the track of carriage-wheels in the unfrequented avenue; but she was alone in the large drawing-room to which we were shown immediately. I saw that there was a struggle going on in her mind, as she stopped in her anxious walk from window to window, and gave her hand in turn to each of us without speaking. The room was not the one in which she usually received me: though commanding a much wider prospect, it was less cheerful; and dark clouds hung over the woods, while heavy raindrops, the precursors of a storm, pattered among the leaves.

"Why did you not come sooner, Charles?" she said, when she had overcome the nervous difficulty which impeded her utterance. "I thought you would see the carriage pass through the village. Do you know that they have taken the boy—my little Adolphus—away from me?"

She stopped abruptly, and an expression of acute anguish, unrelieved by tears, settled upon her mute lips, quivering with emotion.

My own surprise and uneasiness respecting the sick child were almost too great for concealment.

“At noon came a messenger to say the child was wanted,” she continued, speaking at long intervals and with great difficulty. “Surely, it was but natural that his own mother should not pass within twenty miles without wishing to see him:—I’d die first, the darling! But oh, Charles, he was not better!—the fever was still upon him; and it’s the way he went the storm is gathering. The nurse wrapped him up, and said he was able to bear it;—any way, the Countess’s orders must be obeyed. I had no power to keep him even till the storm was over. Summer heat or winter cold don’t harm *her*; but it is not so with tender blossoms. The babes can’t bear it as she does.”

I saw Fairfax’s countenance change as he listened to the low, disjointed words of lamentation which, at times, though she wept not, broke down into inarticulate sounds of wailing. The child appeared to be part of her fragile existence, and, in tearing it suddenly away, the links that connected her with the living world were sundered. Suddenly, he went up to her, and, taking her hand, said, kindly,—

“Shall I follow the little boy, and see that

he is safe? Perhaps Lady St. Lo, when I tell her how much you miss him, will let me bring him back to you."

His words pierced in a moment through the mist that obscured her brain. I do not think that, till he uttered them, Lady Honoria knew that he was in the room, though she had received him courteously. Now, she wept, and said,—

"Blessings on you for the thought! How is it that the cruel sea teaches sailors to speak comfort? But they are either the best or the worst,—the truest friends or the hardest tyrants! Did you say—am I hearing it rightly?—that you'd follow the boy, and bring him back to me?"

"Yes! if the separation causes you a moment's uneasiness. I would do that and a great deal more to please you," said the sailor, frankly. "I cannot conceive that the child can be in better keeping than its own parent's; but no matter what I think! if you are not satisfied, it is very easy to ride anywhere you like to tell me, and ascertain that he is in safety."

"You'll find him by the sea!" said Lady Honoria, her wildness of manner partially returning. "It has been roaring in my ears since they parted us. When I went up to the platform, I saw it all grey and streaked

with foam to the westward. Ever since I came to The Cedars, it has been blue and smiling;—not like the gloomy Northern Ocean I looked over so long at Dunleary, or the strath between Raghery and the mainland. To-day, the water is overcast and stormy for the first time, and the rain-clouds drove past me coldly.”

She shivered, and turned away from the window; then, recollecting herself, she said,—

“But I’m staying you when you should be making the most of the daylight for travelling. Charles Frankland will tell you where you’ll find Lord and Lady St. Lo and their friends. I landed there when I came from Italy. Don’t let what she says turn you from your purpose,” she added, anxiously. “My father, when she speaks, only listens. But he’s firmer about Adolphus than I have ever seen him with her. If you tell him I can’t live without the boy, he’ll make her send him.”

Fairfax did not try her patience by unnecessary delay. His countenance, which was very grave and earnest, did not enlighten me respecting his inward emotions, and he scarcely spoke a syllable as we walked home.

When his horse came to the door, he wrung my hand warmly, saying,—

“I leave what is dearest to me in life

under your charge. Be her friend, Charles !
—I believe she has not one on earth but you
and myself.”

The next moment he leaped into the saddle
and galloped away.

CHAPTER XII.

I HAD hardly doubted, from the moment when Captain Fairfax undertook the task, that he would succeed in his mission ; but it was an unexpected pleasure to be able to convey to Lady Honoria, late that night, the assurance that, on the morrow, the little boy would be restored to her. No sleep would have visited her pillow, if her fears had not been set at rest ; and, even as it was, her worn, anxious looks showed the havoc that miserable day had wrought upon her sensitive frame. Fairfax's note was a very brief one, written after a short interview with Lord and Lady St. Lo, who had, he said, received him with much friendliness ; and his strong representation of Lady Honoria's distress had at once procured the concession he desired. At an early hour, the next morning, the child and his foreign attendant would be on their way to The Cedars.

The following day's post brought me further details from my friend, which were

not intended to be communicated to Lady Honoria. He still wrote hurriedly, and many expressions betokened mental disquietude, arising from circumstances which, he said, must be made clearer to him before he trusted himself to visit Moraston again. No difficulty had met him in the execution of his task, since Lady St. Lo manifested no wish to retain the child, when told of the effect its sudden removal had produced upon her daughter-in-law. Her calm, cold manner, contrasted strikingly with the vehement agitation we had witnessed at The Cedars.

Fairfax's account of the misery which the separation had occasioned to Lady Honoria was listened to with profound attention, and, on the Earl's part, with much evident distress. The Countess said directly, that, since her feelings were so uncontrollable, it was far better not to provoke a fresh outbreak. Like most of Honoria's ill-regulated emotions, her immoderate affection for the child was very unwisely displayed. It was a relief to the Countess, plainly, that Adolphus should be left in England; and she summoned his attendant and gave orders, in Fairfax's presence, respecting his journey back to Moraston.

Lady St. Lo, upon the present occasion, certainly showed none of the maternal weakness, of which, with regard to her elder children,

he had often seen her guilty at Dunleary. He had not, my friend continued, even what he considered the reasonable fears and wishes of a mother to contend with. This cold, proud woman, parting without a single caress from the fragile child whom she might very possibly never see again, was indeed widely different from the agonized being alternately eloquent with passion, or speechless from conflicting emotions, whom he had left behind him, measuring the slowly-passing moments by the beatings of her own heart.

On his arrival in town, Fairfax did not neglect my wishes, but the information he had promised to procure for me was unattainable. Salcombe, delighted, as I anticipated, with the prospect of being once more afloat, used such promptitude, that even the worn-out, leaky vessel to which, for his good services, the Admiralty had thought proper to appoint him, seemed to become a more likely medium for transporting the soldiers to their destination than could have been expected. I saw that the *Alacrity* was ready for sea, and her new commander getting great praise for his diligence, in the next mention occurring in the public papers of the speed with which her equipment had been completed, and preparations made to accommodate the troops.

Fairfax missed him by a day in London

and at Portsmouth, and found, on inquiry, that the man concerning whom I had expressed an interest had sailed with his old lieutenant. Salcombe had always been a favourite with the crew of the cutter, as well as with every member of the coast-guard in Temple's district, and, I dare say, he still retained his place in their regard. I was forced to submit to the disappointment, which I communicated to the anxious relatives of those whose fate had so long been sorrowfully considered as certain; promising to write to my friend, and urge him to make further investigations, as soon as his ship reached the Cape.

My attention was almost entirely given, for the next fortnight, to the little boy at The Cedars, whose case required the utmost care. During the anxious watches which his increased illness rendered necessary,—for the child was especially restless after midnight,—I was frequently sent for; and the confidence Lady Honoria had once reposed in my father devolved upon me. At whatever hour I returned home, after fulfilling the duties which called me elsewhere, I was sure to see that steadily-burning light, in the long tier of upper win-

dows at the Hall, telling of vigilance and sickness; and to find her,—if, as was most frequently the case, a summons awaited me,—with a bright feverish sparkle in her eyes and a flush upon her cheek, bending over the child's couch, or walking, with a quick, noiseless step, to and fro in the corridor into which his room opened, with only the stars shining in, and the faint gleam through the half-closed door making the darkness more visible in that stately gallery. Great masses of impenetrable shadow filled up the large empty spaces, while, in and out of the scanty rays of light, flitted, ghostlike, that white-robed, slender form. Sometimes, the golden harvest moonbeams gliding in, made her seem yet more spiritlike, as they touched her flowing robe, or drooping head and folded hands.

One night—it was that of the full moon, when the last sheaves of the harvest had been gathered in, and from the not distant village came sounds of rustic merrymaking—I found her sitting alone in the large window of the corridor, through which the soft, warm air of the September night was blowing in. Her attitude—childlike in its graceful simplicity—was one that was habitual to her. More than once, in her early girlhood, I had seen that lithe form crouching on one of the low window-seats of our house at Moraston, with its

wild eyes fixed upon the sky, the moonbeams rippling over the bright curls now smoothed into glossy bands, half covered by soft lace.

“Sit down by me, Charles! the child is sleeping. We’d best not wake him,” she said, softly. “It’s just the sort of night for good angels to be abroad in the moonlight: that keeps him quiet. He’s like me and Damian, and poor Adolphus whom he was named after, and feels the least change in the atmosphere; and then he was born in a softer climate than ours, and needs warmth; the east wind blights him. The Italian girl whom Lady St. Lo engaged to nurse him, when he was a baby, is the same, and warms into life when the sunshine falls hottest, and the wind burns like the sirocco. Perhaps England’s too cold a country for him, after all; but where would he be as safe as in your charge? and I’m afraid there’s no use in trying to tempt you to leave Moraston. All I’m worth in the world would be too little to reward you, if you could make up your mind to give up your country practice, and go with us to the Continent, when I’m forced to leave The Cedars.”

The broad tops of the trees, from which the Earl’s mansion was named, rose blackly against the clear sky exactly opposite to us. Under their fanlike branches, the moonbeams

struggled in upon the dark soil, and played fantastically on their massive trunks. So absorbing was the interest I had lately taken in Lady Honoria and the child, that I confess her proposal was a tempting one; but my father's wish, that one of his sons should keep the old name alive at Moraston, and succeed to his practice, had been strongly expressed, and I was the only one of his children capable of complying with it. The grand old Cedars, fixed and immovable in the moonlight, seemed to steady me as I looked at them.

"The child is regaining strength," I said, evading her question. "I do not at present see any necessity for sending him abroad. An English winter, if care be taken, will brace his feeble constitution."

"I'm full of fears and fancies about him; and no wonder," she answered, mournfully. "The keeper said rightly that the children are God's gift, and, when He takes them from us, part of our hearts go with them! Adolphus was the first,—my own little brother who went to sea when he was scarcely able to guide himself; and every hardship that was laid upon him I felt more sorely than he did. Oh, Charles! how could I help loving *him*, the one true friend who was kind to the poor sailor-boy, far away from his home? That one friend never forsook him, but lost all, even

father and mother's love and worldly reputation, for the share he took in defending Adolphus !”

A spasm of emotion passed over her fair face ; when it subsided, she said, in the same low, earnest tone,--

“ It wasn't only poor Adolphus that suffered. That great ship, floating so proudly on the waters, was a prison, and the men who sailed in her grew weary of their lives. At each port she touched at, numbers deserted, till at last the men were not allowed to go ashore. Then the officers remonstrated, and were punished in their turn ; some more, some less severely. One after another was placed under close arrest. There were scarcely enough left free to work the ship on their passage back to England. One among them, who had seen the ruffianly blow levelled at poor Adolphus, resolved to tell what he had witnessed, and declare the truth at all hazards. He knew the risk, and that many who, at the time when injury and wrong were inflicted, had clamoured loudest, would fail him at the last ; but he did it. He brought the Captain to a court-martial for cruelty and tyranny towards his officers and crew, and so far established the charge, that he was warned to exercise more discretion in the amount and mode of punishment inflicted ; but his retalia-

tion was complete. Shane O'Malley was a marked man, from that instant. Every step of his path was beset with difficulties ; and when he shook them off, with his fine temper and noble spirit ! his enemies perjured themselves to ruin him. It did not go so easy with *him*, when he was brought before his judges, as it had done with Captain Harcourt, though every man of the ship's crew wanted to speak for him. *His* sword was not given back with a compliment, but taken from him for alleged contempt of duty, and improper conduct to his superiors ; and he was dismissed the service !”

Lady Honoria's words, which had flowed impetuously, suddenly stopped : her voice failed her completely, and she wept passionately, with the abandonment to sorrow of a proud woman, bitterly sensible to the wound inflicted on the young sailor's reputation by such a sentence, however unmerited it might have been.

“ It 's little he heeds it now !” she said, at last, in broken accents. “ But, then, nothing but my love saved him. He knew that I was Adolphus's sister ; and, in all Ireland, there was no one to me like him. At first, it was like getting my poor dead brother back, to hear from one who had been near him all he had borne, and how his spirit was tried before

he broke his bonds and perished. And then, to think that the same tyrant had laid his heavy hand on Shane, and pressed him down, but not degraded him in my eyes! No, nor in those of men who knew what his conduct had been from first to last:—they upheld him when his own family cast him off. His mother never loved him—Francis O'Malley, his false brother, had all her heart. There was no blessing for my poor Shane, though he knelt at her feet to ask for it. All the provision she would make for him was a small portion to carry him beyond the sea; and even to gain that, he must have promised to give me up, and trouble them no more.

“When it came to thinking of parting, Charles, we couldn't do it,” she continued, speaking very softly and slowly. “You must not be angry with me, but, when Dunleary was gone, the Castle seemed so dreary, and Lady St. Lo so cruel, that I fled away to my lover—my husband, and lived with him on the Islands. We were too happy there, I suppose. Though he talked of leaving me, and going where he might push his fortunes, and win a new name and wealth for me, he could not bear to quit me. We'd have been living at Raghery now, in that cottage, with our baby, if he had not put off to save the

ship! I mind nothing after that. It is as if the black darkness, crossed by lightning flashes, lasted for weeks and months. Perhaps I had not sense enough to feel sorrow even as I might have done. I believe I wanted to live to be the mother of our child. Hour after hour I lay upon my couch at Dunleary, with only that thought keeping me from dying. How I wished for some kind, true-hearted woman near me, like Aunt Margery! but there was no one I could trust; and so the time went by, and still I existed. Will I ever forget the dark night when heaven seemed to open before me, and I saw my own baby smiling! I was very weak, but I took it to my heart, for it had Shane's eyes, and it looked out of them so sweetly. It was winter then — cold, stormy December — at Dunleary. Christmas frosts, — and Christmas fires blazing all over the Castle; but no one warmed my darling. I saw *her* take it, and I couldn't keep it or stop her; but, sure then, with all her faults, I knew she was a mother. My baby cried once, but I never heard its voice again, except in dreams, when I saw it robed in glory with God's angels. *She* rocked it, and sat with it at the far end of a long hall; but she never warmed it at her heart. How could she, when it was marble cold within her?

And so it perished away and died, almost before it saw the light—Shane's baby, that should have been my comfort!"

Again her voice died away in quite inaudible whispers. I tried to comfort her, as well as my deep commiseration for her sufferings, and strong indignation against their promoters, would permit me; but a slight noise from the child's room interrupted us. The little boy had been attacked by one of the convulsive spasms which sometimes racked his feeble frame—his hands were clenched, his limbs rigid; and we were both entirely engrossed for a considerable period in attending upon him. I thought, that if her own infant had perished from neglect—as the tale to which I had been listening with such thrilling interest imported—Lady Honoria was indeed heaping coals of fire on the murderer's head by her divine forgiveness! The paroxysm passed off while she nursed him. Warmth and life returned to the small limbs, which had been changed and contracted to marble stiffness; and I left her with the weary but reviving child pressed close to her heart, and the first rays of the morning light stealing into the chamber of sickness.

CHAPTER XIII.

WHEN the crisis of his disorder was passed, young Adolphus St. Lo recovered his health rapidly. He grew fast, and every day fresh signs of intelligence were developed. Duncan Geddes was his favourite companion, and he began to take pleasure in the active, healthy amusements proper for his age.

Thus relieved from immediate anxiety on his account, my mind reverted to the letter from Ireland which I had received just before Fairfax's departure. I had put it aside at the moment, conscious of my inability, then, to comply with the anxious request it contained. Now that the season had arrived when my attention was less pre-occupied, I began to consider whether it was in my power to leave Moraston for a short time.

In all the communications—and they had latterly been very frequent—which took place between Lady Honoria and myself, while I attended her infant brother, she never alluded to the time she had spent at Naples, when

Fairfax had seen her. I could not discover that she retained any recollection of his visits there; on the contrary, she always referred to their parting at Dunleary Castle as the last occasion of her seeing him. For more than a twelvemonth, her memory was a perfect blank. Mercifully, as it appeared, the cloud of apathy, which for a time obscured her reason, had deadened the acuteness of grief.

Mr. O'Malley had written to me, as the only person with whom he was acquainted, present at the time of the accident to the coast-guard boat. He had a great wish, he said, to see me, since there were circumstances scarcely to be revealed in a letter which he desired to confide to me. Some words I had spoken during his illness had lingered by him, and he could never forget that I had been the first to press upon him a duty too long neglected. From reports which had lately reached him, he entertained a faint hope that it was not too late for justice to be done.

Fearful of awakening expectations which might only lead to fresh disappointment and more bitter grief, I carefully abstained from alluding to these vague surmises, while repeating to Lady Honoria the information lately given to me by Fairfax. I saw her pale cheek flush when I mentioned the return to England of

one of the seamen of Salcombe's cutter, who had long been supposed to have perished when the coast-guard wherry went down off the coast of Antrim ; but the colour slowly faded away, and she did not, as I had feared might be the case, admit the supposition that any other of the daring fellows who put off to the assistance of the American vessel could have escaped drowning.

“ They 'd not have suffered the women they left behind to mourn for them so long, if life was spared ! ” she said, while the tears coursed each other down her cheeks. “ Those brave hearts ! You 're right to tell me all you hear, Charles. I 'd never forgive those who kept the least word from me ;—but, oh, it 's not to be believed that, if he had been living, he would have left me to bear all the waves of sorrow that have flowed over me,—sinking my poor bark, as I saw his go down, when that awful night fell over the sea ! Oh, the hard heart that could endure such sorrow as must have stirred it when his mother got those tidings, and not let word or tear escape her ! She heard it—that beautiful, stately woman, that should have been a prince's bride—and never let them see what it cost her. Lady St. Lo, hard as her own spirit is—like steel when her proud temper rises—couldn't understand it. There were tears in her bright, cold

eyes—drops rising from the mother's heart within her, when she told me. Not a change made in that house—not a guest banished—not a window darkened—when the light of my life was put out! But she felt it. I know the sword pierced her, though she tried to hide the wound, for it was her pride that drove him forth, and never forgave the first offence, nor entered into his feelings, but only writhed at the disgrace which she alone thought had overtaken him.”

I told her that Mr. O'Malley had written to me, inviting me to visit him in Connaught, and that I had some thought, now that the little boy was better, of complying with his request. Lady Honoria seemed pleased and interested.

“You'll not refuse him, Charles?—Shane's father!” she said, softly. “It was not his fault that his son had no better home than the poor cabin where you once saw him. Lady Sarah managed everything then; but her spirit's crushed now, and she's bowed down by remorse. Her husband, the old man you once nursed, has his health again, and takes care that she's no more afflicted than God's will has ordained her to be. But there's one you must seek out for *his* sake and mine,—the old faithful nurse, that always had room for him in her heart and by her

hearth, and bid her pray for me. I've no fears for him, Charles. Heaven—my Heaven, at least, and I think I'm not far wrong—is peopled with brave and gentle spirits like his, who lost his life on the wild wave trying to save others!—and that was not all. When he was young and fiery, not a wrong that was done in his presence but he'd try to right it. Let it be a poor sailor misused by his Captain,—or the lad that had his spirit broken by unkindness,—or the old Irish foster-mother in her cabin,—see, how they all looked up to and loved him! It wasn't for this world he was made; others may get on better; but, sure, in Christ's kingdom he'll take his place. There, where the lowly are not abased, and the brave, true spirit isn't shamed, I'll find him—I and the boy, my little Adolphus, if we can but win our way thither!"

There was no mention whatever of Lady Sarah O'Malley in her husband's letter. It was very evident that a change had taken place in the household, and that she was no longer the mover and instigatrix of every action. The servants who met me at the small seaport town near Mr. O'Malley's dwelling, spoke only of the master, and seemed to

have had their orders from him. The equipage—an Irish outside car—was much less neatly appointed than her carriages, in former days, had been; but the horses—for we had two, driven tandem-fashion—were capital, and drew me along the deserted but excellent road with marvellous rapidity.

A hale, hearty-looking country gentleman was walking up and down briskly in front of the mansion, as I approached it. I should scarcely have recognised my former patient, but he welcomed me with great cordiality, giving half a dozen orders to the numerous domestics idling about, as if for the purpose of showing his complete independence. Altogether, the establishment struck me as being greatly altered, and more Irish than formerly. So far as minor points went, the lady's rule had been more conducive to comfort and elegance than her husband's; but I was glad to see such demonstrations of health and vigour in him who was now, as I suspected, the master, for the first time, in his own house.

Lady Sarah did not make her appearance till dinner-time, which had been unceremoniously altered by Mr. O'Malley to suit my supposed wishes. The stately lady conducted herself with grave dignity; but there was no longer the same air of command and conscious superiority of intellect that I had no-

ticed on my former visit. More than once she sighed very heavily, especially when some slight allusion occurred to my previous stay in Ireland; but, in general, the subject was avoided. Her husband and I conversed on indifferent topics, and she took scarcely any notice of what was passing.

After she had left the room, my host drew his chair nearer to me.

“Lady Sarah——” he began, as if accustomed to that mode of introducing what he wished to say; then, changing the formula impatiently, he went on,—“that is, I, Mr. Frankland, not my wife—I assure you, she troubles herself very little about what is going on in this house—have ventured to give you a great deal of trouble, on what you will probably think very inadequate grounds. I have, in this matter, acted entirely for myself. Neither Lady Sarah, nor my son, Colonel O’Malley, have presumed to interfere with me. Independence is my hobby; and, if you will favour me with any data on which to proceed, I shall conduct the inquiry in which I am interested entirely myself.”

The old Irish gentleman’s tardy assumption of authority evidently sat uneasily upon him. He looked half afraid of contradiction still; and there was a secret reference to some fancied opposition in every sentence.

“There is a very general impression in this neighbourhood that my youngest son, Shane O'Malley, who has been for many years in disgrace with me, is a much finer fellow than his brother. You would have me say, *was*—but I cannot bring myself to speak of my poor boy in the past tense yet. No, no!—in spite of his mother's desponding convictions, we shall have him back among us. My eldest son, the Colonel, will not stir a finger in this matter. My wife is resigned to the afflictions sent by Providence; but I have not given him up, and I don't mean to do so. While there's life there's hope. That may not be quite logical, but it's sufficiently so for an Irishman; and I am certain he is not dead.”

He filled his glass, and I did the same in silence, wishing to allow him to come in his own way to the conclusion at which he was aiming.

“Shane's mother never did him justice. I said so at the time when I first set the boy astride on my best hunter, and saw that the little fellow never flinched. He did not know the meaning of fear; but his heart was tender—too tender for his profession. Lady Sarah O'Malley had very strict ideas of discipline and loyalty, and she never forgave him for the breach of duty to his superiors which

caused him to be dismissed from the service. But the yoke may be made too heavy; it pricks and galls; and, if we don't wince from it ourselves, we may see that it weighs down others. Then, again, his marriage did not please her. Lord St. Lo is a spendthrift and thoroughly worthless; but you need not outlaw his children. Shane took his own way; and, after a good many years' experience of domestic life, I am by no means sure that his plan was not the best!"

The old gentleman laughed, and refilled his glass with claret. Then, changing his tone, he said, gravely,—

"My poor boy had friends who have never forgotten him; and, what is more to the purpose, he remembers them. Last month, the poor old woman who was a mother to him in infancy, received from an unknown source a considerable sum of money. 'Who should send it, sir, but Master Shane?—he that never passed my door, when he was but a poor man, without dropping a token.' That was her opinion, Mr. Frankland, and it is mine. Others may not agree with me, but it appears to me a strong evidence that Shane is living."

I quite agreed with him, and expressed the coincidence of sentiment so strongly that his heart warmed towards me.

“Bring the coffee here!” he said to the servant who announced that it was ready. “I don’t want to see my lady’s discouraging looks and her black gown. She has never put off mourning since that boat was lost; and I believe it is out of contradiction to me that she displays this persevering affection for the child she neglected. Yes, sir! if Shane ran wild, and married to displease us, it was his mother’s fault. She had her own way then; but I’ve taken the command now, and I’ll not lay it down till I get him back. That is”—he said, dropping his voice—“if the poor lad is not past recalling.

“Colonel O’Malley is not here now. I don’t want him. Not that he has any authority, or could hinder what I’m doing, but I don’t want to be troubled by interference. Shane’s father is the proper person to apply for information, and I’ve done little else lately but seek after it. Mr. Temple has been very useful to me. There was a time when he would not have been allowed to dine at my table. Now, he is a welcome guest. I choose my own society, and if Lady Sarah does not approve of it, she keeps her room. He was my boy’s friend, and gave him a home when he was turned away from his father’s house. They had been at sea together, and Mr. Temple thought that grievous injustice had been

practised. *He* did not go by reports. He was not a Jacob, treacherously stealing away his brother's blessing, but he was a thoroughly kind-hearted man; and when Shane wouldn't be idle, he gave him such employment as he could. My poor boy! to think that he needed it!—and Shane worked well, and served him honestly.”

The old man bent his head on his hands clasped upon the table, and wept. While he was silent, I told him what I had seen of his son, and how highly Salcombe and Temple had spoken of him. I also described Lady Honoria as one whom any family ought to have been proud to receive among them. Mr. O'Malley groaned heavily.

“It is always the best that are taken from us first. Don't tell me any more good of poor Shane, or I shall lose all hope of recovering him! When his brother talks sneeringly of him, I expect he will start up, were it from the depths of the sea, to give him the lie! Now, sir, I think I'm equal to hearing the rest,” he continued, after a pause; “I mean, every particular of the storm, and my boy going off to save the ship's crew that were in distress. Did the boat really go down before your eyes, as they say, and did *she* look on? But then, they did not all perish.”

As fully, yet as succinctly as I could, I

told the story, of which every detail was still fresh in my recollection. Mr. O'Malley listened with the deepest attention. His eyes filled with tears when I told him that I had seen Lady Honoria, as well as his son, on the Islands, and of the brief but intense happiness which her own lips had since informed me they had enjoyed together.

"She shall be my daughter, at all events. Don't tell me there is no hope! There must be, with such a glorious creature waiting for him. It is enough to fetch him from the grave. If you like to join Lady Sarah now—I see you take no wine—I'll be with you presently. Leave me to think it all over. I pity her, too, when I am not angry; for, though she will not own it, her grief has been bitter. She has never held up her head since."

I thought of his words when I entered the drawing-room, and saw the once proud, but now faded, beauty sitting alone in the dusky twilight, with her eyes fixed on the faint outline of the Reek, which rose obscurely, half hidden by the evening mists, above the trees of the domain. Her drooping attitude, and the absence of the energy which had once distinguished her, showed me how deeply the blow had pierced her heart; but she did not seem disposed to manifest towards me any of the confidence which her husband had so

freely given. Our conversation was of the coldest description, and she retired to rest early, almost immediately after Mr. O'Malley joined us, bidding him a formal good night, and bestowing upon me the most frigid leave-taking that was in accordance with her ideas of politeness. The instant she had left us, her husband reverted to the subject which filled his thoughts, and we sat up discussing it until long past midnight.

CHAPTER XIV.

SHANE O'MALLEY's foster-mother looked up quickly from her potato plot, when my shadow fell upon the path, as I opened the garden-gate in front of her cottage. She had grown older and feebler; the spade seemed too heavy for her hand with which she was digging up her stock of food for the winter. Her still comely face was flushed with the exertion, but the colour faded from her complexion, which was clearer and fairer than most women of her age and class can boast of in Mayo, as she caught the sound of a strange footstep.

"It's not the one I was looking for," she said, in a low voice; "but come in, sir! I mind who you are now, and I'd be glad to see you cross the doorstep. Is it staying at the great house you do be, your honour? I take it kindly of you to look in upon me."

She curtseyed low, and led me into her cottage, which was scrupulously neat and clean. Over the mantel-shelf were hung a

fowling-piece and shot-belt, bright and shining, as if polished with especial care.

"It's a long time since you came this way, sir," she said, sighing. "We've been very quiet down here. Maybe the times are mending. The praties have come round fine, and the boys have left off rioting. Ye'll mind how the stones were flying past, and the military fighting in the streets about the bread-carts, when the ould gintleman was hurt? He's doing well now, and has his hand to the fore in everything. You'll have noticed what a change there is in him."

"I should scarcely have known him," I said; "but the alteration in Lady Sarah O'Malley struck me as even more surprising."

"Sure, now! she's getting in years. Her health's been failing," said the old woman. "But she takes her airings regular, and was past here but a while since. The mistress is a fine woman still, and bears up bravely."

"She has had much to try her," I observed. "You, my poor friend, are not looking nearly so well as formerly; and yet the fine young man whom I once took for your son was but your foster-child. His mother must, indeed, have felt his loss severely."

"It's not easy to guess what she's feeling. It's little I have to comfort me; and where's the good of concealing the grief for my heart's

darling?" said the honest nurse, with warm tears running down her furrowed cheek. "Lady Sarah is quite different from a poor old cratur like me; and then the babe didn't lie at her breast, like the Colonel. She put him from her at his birth, and never felt for him afterwards. With the brogue that he caught from me on his little tongue, small blame to him! when she came back from the Coort, he was a shame and disgrace to her. But it's not that she hasn't feelings: they are what's troubling her. She knows it wasn't right to make such a difference between the childer, and perhaps her conscience isn't easy about it. I can't tell. She'll go to her grave silent, if it is so. That's her nature, and she can't fight against it."

"We can all struggle against such unchristian prejudices," I said, angrily. "From first to last, her conduct seems to me to have been unjust and unnatural; and if the poor young man was placed in positions which did not do credit to his family, the blame lies chiefly with his mother for neglect and unkindness."

"I'd rather you didn't spake so hard against her!" said Mrs. Moriarty. "She's a thrue-born lady anyhow, and I can't shake off the riverence I had for her. Wasn't she more like an angel than a woman, when she first

came among us?—and courteous, too, as the rale gentry are, mostly. It's she that wouldn't draw the pin out of the gate yonder, without saying, with your lave! and never calls me less than Misthress Moriarty. And didn't she trust me with the beautiful baby, that was more precious than sunlight to the widow that had lost her own? It isn't for us poor people to judge her; and it wasn't *his* wish. Masther Shane never liked to speak against my lady. He worshipped the very ground she walked upon, and would have died at her feet to win her pardon. 'Twas her thinking he'd deserved punishment that cut him to the heart."

"You do not reconcile me to her conduct," I said, "though I admire her son's forbearance. Surely it was a mother's part to defend and watch over him?"

"I'm not able to give you a proper answer, sir; but sure, then, she's a fine lady!" answered Mrs. Moriarty. "What a spirit she must have to bear up! and she's had to uphold the family till lately. The masther's but a poor cratur, and never had his health. We never minded much about him; 'twas always Lady Sarah we were feared to displease; and I can't part with the notion that she is first in that house. Is it thrue that she's breaking?"

"I have had but a brief opportunity of judging, as I only saw her last night for a

short time ; but she has lost every trace of the beauty you admired so much, and she hardly spoke in my hearing. This morning, she has not been visible."

"Och, wirrasthrue ! and she always the first in the house ! That 's a bad sign ! And the masther, poor soul ! how does he get on ? He 'll be at fault for everything, if the mistress is poorly. I mind when not a horse was saddled, nor a cork drawn, without Lady Sarah's commands. How is it ordered now ?"

"Sufficiently well to satisfy me," I said, somewhat impatiently. "Mr. O'Malley has recovered his health, and thinks that he is the proper person to govern his own house. All minor objects seem unimportant to him, compared with the hope he entertains of finding some trace of his lost son's existence, or at least doing justice to his memory. I have come a long distance to aid in this task."

The impetuous feelings of the Irishwoman burst forth as I spoke. For some moments she could not answer me. At last, she said,—

"Blessings on ye for the thought !—My poor boy !—I mind now, he told me you were ever kind to him, and got him his passage in the ship to come to me, when the whole town was up, and the pavement flying. And now the father's heart is stirred, but it 's too late ! There 's no doubt he 's dead—he that was so grand and beautiful, with the step of a king,

and an eye like the eagles' that sometimes swoop down from Ballyslieve. He'd never have sent me the dirty gold that he, perhaps, bought with his heart's blood, if he'd been living, and no word to tell who sent it! Not one syllable of comfort to his poor old nurse! not even his seal on the packet, nor his writing on the cover—I'll never have the heart to touch it!"

She moved slowly across the room, and taking the lid off an antiquated China teapot—very probably a wedding-gift from her former mistress—showed me a pile of notes and gold, which, she said, had been left at her door by a seaman, who thrust it in and ran away before she knew what it was, or could question him. The cover of the packet lay with the money, and it contained only her name and address, written in a hand quite foreign to her.

"You do not, then, believe that he perished at sea, four years ago," I said, "in the boat that went down off Raghery?"

"I know he did not!" she replied; "why would I hide it longer? 'Twas he told me not to name it, since no one wanted him to live but his old foster-mother. Oh, the bitterness that was in his tone when he said it! He was going far away, where no one would ever hear more of him; but he couldn't help taking leave of his only true friend in ould Ireland. 'Twas best others should think him buried

under the blue waters, and not like to trouble them."

This strong confirmation of the faint hope we entertained that Shane had survived the shipwreck, increased my anxiety to hear more; and I asked, hurriedly, why he had not communicated with any of his relations, if, indeed, he had returned to Ireland.

"Sure, and you don't suppose he'd tell an ould cratur like me, and not she that had the best right in the world to know he was living!" exclaimed the Irishwoman, indignantly. "There was one he loved more than father or mother, and worked his way back to England as a common seaman—for he had no money to pay his passage—that he might see and comfort her. She was a grand lady, too, and her friends were just as angry as his, and kept her from him—and many a wild hazard he ran, years back, to see her; and wasn't ashamed to take employment with Mr. Temple, that had been his friend always, and knew his proper station. Then, she that was his love, too, wouldn't credit his disgrace, but held fast by him, and left her father's house, after her brother went away, to live with Shane, who was her husband, in the best and only way he had of providing for her. 'Twas but a poor plenishing for such as she was; but, sure, they were young and happy, and loved each other!

Better to live so than to forget him and injure him, as she did afterwards. Oh, the heart was fairly broke within him when he left off troubling her, and went back over the seas to find a grave, since his own friends and country had cast him out, and even his wife was too proud to own him !”

“There has been some great deception practised here,” I said. “I am certain that Lady Honoria never consciously grieved him, and that she does not know of his survival. Did none of his own family see him at that time ?”

“The Colonel ;—he that’s hand and glove with Lady St. Lo, and was stopping with them at some foreign city ;—but he never was Shane’s friend. Francis O’Malley always had a black heart, and they say he’s worse than ever since he has been so much in that lady’s company. Lady Sarah didn’t like her. The first and only quarrel she ever had with the Colonel was when he brought the Countess and Lord St. Lo to visit her. He has not been here since, and people say it was fearful to hear him rail against the mother that had always over-indulged him, when she thwarted his humour. If Shane trusted to his false brother to stand by him, ’twas a broken reed he had to lean upon !”

“Are you certain that Colonel O’Malley

and his brother were together in Italy?" I said, anxious to establish this important fact. "What could be his motive for concealing the circumstance?"

"He 'd make as many doublings as a hunted hare before the truth was got from him," said the old woman, vindictively. "'Twas the same when they were boys; always the fault put upon Shane. 'True for yez, the young masters met beyond seas in the Italian counthry, —I didn't mind the name of it. Shane told his brother what throuble he was in, and bade him, for the love of Heaven, get him sight and speech of his wife. He wouldn't take any one's word but her own, or believe that all she wanted was to abide peaceably with her friends and kindred, and hear no more of him. I doubt the Colonel did not make much of a messenger, but still Shane saw her. Her father and mother were by, but they put no force upon her. There was nothing to hinder her saying that she loved him, and would wait till he had won his way to better fortune; but she wouldn't speak a word, and shrank from him, and never denied it, when her father at last took it upon himself to say, it was her wish and theirs that Shane should give up his claim to her. He couldn't lave her free that was his wife before God and man; but he thought the sooner he was dead the better, and so he told

me, when he came here, he had nothing left to live for. No one asked for news of him. My lady never named him for good or evil, and nobody thought much, then, of the masther. So he went away again, did Shane. He'd an offer from the government of the counthry where he had been, across the say, to fight for them, (I think t'was in Mexico, he said), and he thought he 'd take it. It's just what he saved out of his pay, the poor lad has sent me for a token. 'I may as well get killed as a soldier, mother; sure the say won't drown me!' These were his last words, and I'll never hear him spake again. To think that he, with the best blood of the counthry running in his veins, should list for a soldier, and be buried in a bloody grave, no one knows where! and I left with nothing of my brave boy but the memory, deep hid in my heart; and the money I wouldn't change to keep me from starvin'. Sure, his blood is on the coin!"

She covered up her treasure, and put it away on the shelf from which she had taken it, seeming to entertain no fear of its security.

"If it's as you say, sir, and I am fain to believe it, there's a great sin lyin' at the door of those who parted them poor childer," she said, solemnly. "His young widow's to be pitied, for Shane loved her dearly; and I'm feared she'll never see him again on this side the grave."

CHAPTER XV.

LADY SARAH's manner to me was somewhat more affable, that afternoon. She did not leave the dining-room early, but I think she was induced to stay there rather by a vague feeling of curiosity and undefined apprehension, than from any pleasure she derived from the conversation. For my part, it was almost impossible to maintain the semblance of indifference. My thoughts wandered away constantly, sometimes to the far-off battle-field, where the poor young soldier, neglected, as he believed, by his friends, and misjudged by his country, had perhaps thrown away his life.

When the servants had left the room, our small party became very silent. Lady Sarah altered her position, and sat watching me. Mr. O'Malley, not much accustomed of late years to take the principal part in conversation, grew nervous and contradictory. Neither his wife nor myself was sufficiently composed to follow the thread of his somewhat rambling discourse. My brief replies, and her obstinate

taciturnity, offended him. At last, he grew sullen, and left off speaking, 'The silence remained for a length of time unbroken.

Meanwhile, the shadow of the distant chain of mountains lengthened on the plain. The bogs grew purple and dark brown, crossed here and there by a low gleam of vivid sunlight that glittered on the water, with which the late autumnal rains had filled the trenches cut in the peat. Still farther off, the blue peak of Croagh Patrick, with the crescent moon rising above it, lifted its cone into the clear azure of the sky. 'The murmur of the unseen Atlantic, borne by the westerly breeze, came strongly in through the open windows.

My first inclination had been to await Lady Sarah's departure, before I told Mr. O'Malley that the widow Moriarty had seen his son, nearly a year after he was generally supposed to have perished; but, after waiting some time, my disposition changed. I reflected that I had no right to conceal from the mother of Shane the discovery which I had made. In part, I believed that she anticipated some startling revelation; her finer perceptions having informed her sooner than her husband, that the thoughts with which my mind was preoccupied were of vital import to them both. Her eyes wandered from the indistinct landscape outside the window to my face; her features


quivered with intense, though suppressed, emotion. The quick instinct and impulsive feelings of her nature were all on the alert. Dormant activity, far greater than her husband would ever display, lay beneath that rigid exterior. The low, even tones of her voice, her cold manner, did not disguise from me that her heart was beating with anxiety.

I do not recollect the exact terms employed by me in making the revelation, but I shall never forget the change that passed over Lady Sarah O'Malley's face, when she heard that Shane had undoubtedly survived the loss of the boat and his companions off Raghery. For a moment, my mind fully realised the tradition, handed down in the family, of the surpassing beauty of her countenance in youth. Over the almost ghastly paleness of complexion, now habitual with her, stole a faint, rosy gleam, bringing back long-absent, pearly tints. Her eyes seemed to deepen, as well as brighten, and she lifted her bowed head with the stateliness which I had thought for ever departed from her gestures.

Mr. O'Malley received the tidings differently. I believe more precaution should have been used, but his assumption of dignity, and apparently increased vigour, had deceived me. His head sank upon the table. For a moment, I was afraid that he was the victim of

some afflicting paralytic seizure, for his hands, and the whole of his right side, seemed rigid and immovable. Lady Sarah was roused still more by her husband's illness. She was as quick in her suggestions, as prompt in her obedience to my directions, as she had been years before ; and when his cravat was loosened, and he felt the shock of the iced water with which she bathed his face and hands, and the cool air from the window at which we placed him, he revived. Nevertheless, while she looked and moved as if twenty years had been taken from her shoulders, her husband, even when tolerably recovered, appeared a much older and feebler man than before this comparatively slight attack.

“Throw the windows higher, Mr. Frankland ! Don't ring !” she said, in the clear, strong voice of former days, which lately had become weak and hoarse, and was but seldom heard. “The servants can be of no use. I understand these attacks, which are easily warded off, if taken in time. Your aid is more than sufficient. The night breeze, cool from the mountains and the sea, will bring back life and animation ; and I want to hear the rest of your story. Go on ! Mr. O'Malley can follow you, or I will tell him all you say. This poor misguided boy ! Are you certain his old nurse was not dreaming ? Did she say that



she actually saw him—heard him speak? Shane would go to her first, I dare say. He belonged to her more than to us. Tastes, unfortunately implanted early, clung to him through life.”

There was indescribable haughtiness in her tone.

“This poor widow, madam, had a right to your son’s love,” I replied. “At her cottage hearth, I can bear witness that he was always welcome. There is no possibility of his foster-mother’s having been deceived as to his reappearance; but you must not let your hopes grow too strong, since Shane was in a desperate mood, and no tidings of him have since reached her. The only person who is qualified to give us further information is your eldest son. Your commands may induce him to afford it; though I cannot guess what has kept him from imparting to you, long since, intelligence so important as that he had seen and conversed with his younger brother, long after you and his father believed him to have perished.”

While I was speaking, Lady Sarah’s countenance again underwent a very striking change. The expression of sudden joy and relief which had given a momentary beauty to her faded features, died completely away, leaving behind it, however, the stamp of revived energy and indomitable pride.

“ You do not understand the circumstances in which Colonel O'Malley and myself have been placed by this boy's misconduct,” she answered. “ Be so good as to class us together ! for, during many painful years, my eldest son has had to stand by me, and to save his father from shocks which he was then—which I still believe him to be—unable to bear. Not a speck rests upon Francis ! His reputation is quite intact. No doubt he will be able, as a soldier and a gentleman, to explain his conduct satisfactorily. He is not here at present, and you will be kind enough, in this matter, during his absence, to respect my feelings. With our youngest son, I regret to say, the case is quite otherwise. From his birth, Shane has never done us credit. I rejoice to hear that he escaped death, four years ago ; but, if he still lives,—as I trust may be proved, for he has many errors to repent of,—he can never be to me what his brother has been. No trouble, no cost shall be spared which may give him yet one more chance of retrieving the past ;—that unhappy period which has given his family so much cause to blush for him.”

Mr. O'Malley's distress, while his wife was speaking in her haughtiest manner, was truly pitiable. He literally gasped for breath to answer her ; but when, at last, he found words, his utterance was indistinct and feeble.

“Shane is just as much my son as his brother. I don't think he has been well used. Lady Sarah, I do not mean to blame you, quite the contrary; but I will not have my poor boy ill-treated. That was a very fine action of his, when he went out in the storm to help the American sailors. I do not hear of anything like it that his brother has done. Francis was always your favourite his mother's darling. I am not at all sure that he deserved to have all the love that should have been divided between them. Our two sons!—I should like to see them together.”

Lady Sarah looked at him compassionately.

“That is quite impossible. Shane's clandestine marriage, his disgraceful expulsion from the navy, have divided him from us for ever. Perhaps, he was nearer to me when I thought that the waves were washing over his corpse. When he and Lord St. Lo's daughter enter this house, my place in it will be vacated.”

She rose as she spoke, and, with a slight gesture of leave-taking, quitted the room. The moment her tall form was gone, her husband's energies revived. His hand did not shake as he returned to the table, and filled his glass from the magnum of claret that stood as yet untouched on the board.

“Here's to my poor boy's health! and I

wish he stood between us !” the old Irish gentleman said, heartily. “Shane O’Malley ! and may he come back to his own home and country ! That is a toast you ’ll not refuse to pledge me in, Mr. Frankland, whatever the Colonel and my lady may say to it.”

Right heartily I echoed his good wishes, and the old man brightened up rapidly as we counted the chances of his son’s returning, and decided them to be in our favour. I bade adieu overnight to Mr. O’Malley, promising that, before I left Ireland, I would visit Temple, and learn from him any particulars respecting Shane O’Malley which might help us to re-establish his reputation, if he were living, or to clear his memory from reproach, if he had perished.

Mr. O’Malley wrung my hand warmly as he parted from me ; and, at a very early hour in the morning, before any of the family were stirring, I was journeying across the desolate country which lay between the Mayo mountains, and the wild sea-coast district of which Temple had the superintendence, on the shores of the North Sea.

CHAPTER XVI.

TEMPLE was visiting his outposts, when the mail-car by which I had travelled dropped me at the door of the principal inn of the small town, where I had once stayed for some weeks with Salcombe. A coast-guard man was waiting to receive me and my small amount of luggage, which I consigned to him while I went in search of the officer.

The view from the lofty cliffs awakened thoughts in my mind which had for a long time slumbered. There were the white towers of Dunleary, the Castle on the Island, reflected in the calm waters of the North Sea. The wind was off the land, and the usually swinging-bridge rested motionless; there were no figures crossing it. The sea lay grey and silent, with heavy banks of cloud and shifting masses of fog flitting across the sky, impelled by some upper current of air, for all was cold and still around me. Bright lights coming, I scarcely knew whence, for the aspect of the heavens was dull, fell eccentrically on the

headlands, and on the fields that sloped away from the coast. In one or two places, these rays glittered on the water, or on the sails of passing vessels ; and one rich stream of yellow radiance was caught by the vane on the top of the signal-post, on the lofty summit of Kenbane Head.

There were two persons standing together in front of the watch-box, only one of whom came forward to meet me. As Temple's companion turned slightly away, but without leaving the spot, and stood looking seaward through a glass which he had unslung from his shoulder, a certain resemblance in figure and attitude to the handsome youth I had seen at this very place, the first time I visited it, struck me forcibly. When I had taken a few steps forward, the likeness was gone. Excepting for the circumstance I have mentioned, I do not think it would have occurred to me at all. No two persons of the same family, both fine-looking men, could well be more different than Shane O'Malley and his elder brother.

The Colonel was a thorough man of the world, cold-hearted, self-satisfied, and accustomed to regard, not the welfare or opinion of others, but his own selfish interest as the guide of his actions. Though his person was handsome, he lacked the height of the younger

O'Malley ; his figure was not so agile, and in his hard, well-moulded, but unimpressible countenance, there was none of the fire, mingled with softness, which characterised the features of the sailor.

Temple introduced us to each other, seeing that the Colonel did not move away, while, at the same time, for a moment or two, we neither of us made any sign of mutual recognition. On my part, I was completely taken by surprise, and my feelings were by no means agreeable ones. He had been talking fluently for several minutes, before I could at all make up my mind on what terms we were to stand towards each other.

Colonel O'Malley appeared quite unconscious that I could have any motive for thinking unfavourably of his conduct. He thanked me warmly for having paid attention to what he seemed aware had been his parents' wishes ; and inquired, with a very proper manifestation of filial anxiety, after Mr. O'Malley and Lady Sarah. He had heard from the latter, he said, recently ; but her letters seldom contained a sufficiently minute account of herself to satisfy him. In the one last received, she appeared to be very uneasy respecting his father. Knowing that Mr. Temple was expecting a visit from me, he had purposely thrown himself in my way, in order to obtain the earliest in-

telligence of the state of things in his own home.

Temple was finishing his instructions to the man at the look-out, while Colonel O'Malley questioned me. I am convinced my answers were cold and unsatisfactory; but my companion, who, I heartily trusted, would soon leave us, did not seem inclined to be shaken off. He walked on with us to the next headland, conversing—as, I think, it would have seemed to me at another time—easily and pleasantly; sometimes on domestic matters, at others about the wild country I had just passed over, and the prospects of sport during the rest of the season, pressing me to return with him to Mayo, and share the amusement to which he was looking forward, during the ensuing month, cock-shooting in the hill-covers, and following the old squire's fox-hounds. Mr. O'Malley, for the last two years, had given up the management of the pack to him.

I declined all his offers coldly. My visit to Mr. O'Malley, necessarily a brief one, had been on business, and I was now on my way home. If he could assist us in the pursuit of the object we had in view, I should, at any time he would appoint, be happy to communicate with him.

Colonel O'Malley's countenance, for the

first time, slightly altered. His dark features glowed with a sort of suppressed excitement, and he said, hurriedly,—

“Is it really possible that a sensible, prudent man like yourself, Mr. Frankland,—one able to judge of the hazard of awakening false hopes,—can have encouraged my father in cherishing this fatal illusion? My mother writes me word that he holds to it more strongly than ever; and she attributes—you must pardon her if she is mistaken—the revival of this vision to you. I can scarcely believe it.”

“Rather say, the blame, if any, lies with yourself, Colonel O'Malley,” I replied. “The discovery of your brother's having been seen by you, living and well, long after his supposed death at sea, has naturally agitated Mr. O'Malley. Whatever may have been your reasons for concealing the circumstance, its now coming suddenly to light involves you in a very serious responsibility.”

“Yes, I understand. I quite see the view you take of it. My poor old father, too! I am heartily sorry for his disappointment. But I really know nothing whatever of Shane for the last three years. Not five minutes, as Mr. Temple can tell you, before you joined us, I was conversing with him on the subject of the mysterious disappearance of this unfortunate

younger brother of mine ; and, I am grieved to say, he knows no more of him than I do."

His frank tone, and, still more, Temple's not contradicting him, showed that he spoke the truth. In another moment, he went on,—

"It really seemed scarcely worth while to awaken a fresh storm of grief, by relating what was but another of the strange wild freaks of this ill-fated boy. Shane himself thought it best that no one should know of his re-appearance. I acted, I can assure you, as I firmly believed was for the best, in concealing his existence. The welfare of a noble family was at stake. There was, as you truly say, a most serious responsibility involved. But very soon—not many months after my brother again left Ireland—I had reason to believe that I had judged rightly. With his usual rashness, but this time under an assumed name, Shane had enrolled himself among the volunteers in the American army, then invading Mexico ; and there is no sort of doubt that he fell in one of the very first battles."

Temple's grave countenance did not belie this assertion. "I fear," he said, after a momentary silence, "that Colonel O'Malley is right. If Shane, who was my friend for years,—with whom I served in more than one ship, and whom I knew to be possessed of as gal-

ant and true a spirit as ever visited this earth, —were living, I should undoubtedly have heard from him.”

“I cannot be satisfied with these negative assurances,” I said, warmly, “nor will this poor youth’s father. Has any authentic account of his death been received? Till that is the case, I shall believe that his fate is uncertain. Those who drove him to despair by misrepresenting the sentiments of the woman he loved, and who admit that they thought proper to conceal the fact of his having revisited his country, are not impartial witnesses.”

“These are heavy charges, Mr. Frankland,” said Colonel O’Malley, while a dark expression gathered about his eyes, and his brows were, for an instant, drawn together by passion; “but I will not quarrel with you for them. Besides the tranquillity of my own parents, as I have before hinted, the peace and honour of another family were at stake. Everything I did had the concurrence of Lord and Lady St. Lo, and their daughter.”

My face, I felt, glowed as he mentioned her.

“I do not think Lord St. Lo has been in a state to guide his own family for some time past,” I said; “and I cannot admit the present Countess’s right to govern his daughter’s actions.”

“ Before proceeding farther,” said Colonel O’Malley, interrupting me, ere I had finished what I intended saying, and speaking in a very grave manner, “ I think you should know that a most afflicting dispensation has lately befallen the persons of whom you seem disposed to speak harshly. Lord St. Lo is my friend. For his wife I entertain sentiments of the deepest and sincerest compassion. In the first place, then, I must deny your premises, so far as they imply that the Earl, at the time of Shane’s return from America, was unequal to the management of his affairs. Reckless, faulty,—too much of the boon companion,—very careless of the happiness of his wife and children, no doubt, he has long been,—but the stroke which has, indeed, made him as a child in the hands of her who has so long watched over him, who still reverences and strives to conceal his weakness, has only lately fallen upon him.”

There was so much earnestness in his manner that I believed him to be sincere, and listened attentively while he narrated to me, how much Lady St. Lo had suffered, when she found herself alone in a foreign country, with a husband totally unable to protect her. After a winter spent in the indulgence of the intemperate habits which had grown upon him as he advanced in life, Lord St. Lo had

sunk rapidly into a condition bordering on imbecility. It was even rumoured that he had tried to destroy himself. In this state, Colonel O'Malley said, he had found them on his return from a cruise in the Mediterranean, and, since that time, he represented himself as having been their chief support. He had now accompanied them to Dunleary, where Lady St. Lo wished to reside in retirement. Anything was preferable, in her opinion, to obtruding upon the world the sight of infirmities of mind and temper from which she was herself resigned to suffer martyrdom, rather than yield over the care of her husband to strangers. Only those who were admitted to close intimacy knew, Colonel O'Malley added, what this heroic woman had to endure.

I felt, while he was speaking, that he was leading me away from the point I wished to investigate; and, when he had concluded, I said,—

“ You tell me that, in all the measures you took with regard to your brother's visit to Italy, you had the concurrence, not only of Lord and Lady St. Lo, but likewise of the Earl's daughter. Will you let me hear your grounds for this assertion?”

Colonel O'Malley hesitated. He looked

at Temple, who had walked on, after perceiving that our discussion was of a private nature.

“You are to be trusted,” he said, at last. “I would not to any other man breathing admit the necessity of glossing over the imprudences committed by that unhappy girl. No sacrifice, Lady St. Lo felt, was too great, if it could avail to save her reputation, tarnished recklessly, in spite of every effort to avert her destruction. But enough of this. Lady St. Lo, who has been more than a mother to her, at the cost of her own tenderest feelings, disguised her fault. Lady Honoria, in the world’s eye, is guiltless, and she has a part assigned her which Nature has admirably qualified her to enact. Satisfied with this,—deeply grateful to her step-mother, whose forbearing generosity she, at last, was forced to appreciate,—Lady Honoria was contented to relinquish a most unwise and unhappy connexion. She met Shane as a stranger, and it was her silence which convinced him that his wildest pleadings and upbraidings were useless, and of its being her own wish that, on this side of the grave, they should meet no more.”

The stern, hard lines which made his countenance differ so materially from his brother’s deepened and darkened as he spoke. In the

expression of his eyes there was a painful meaning, which I understood, but it did not convince me.

“You speak,” I said, “as though this alliance, which I admit to have been imprudent, merited a deeper stigma. Are you not aware that you are alluding to your brother’s wife? I have heard of their marriage from Lady Honoria’s own lips.”

A sneer altered the curve of Colonel O’Malley’s handsome mouth. “I am afraid there would be some difficulty in proving the marriage. Neither Shane’s family nor Lady Honoria’s have ever acknowledged it. From the first, Lord St. Lo absolutely prohibited the connexion. I repeat it—through the Countess’s care and prudence, Lady Honoria was saved; and I, the only one of Shane’s family cognisant of his return, took it upon myself to quash all mention of his existence. Better, ill-fated as he was, that he should be left to his destiny, than let him be the means of farther injury to one who had narrowly escaped incurring through his agency the worst doom that can befall any woman!”

He spoke with vehement agitation.

“Do not,” he continued, “let the views which I see you entertain prevent your performing the part of a friend towards Lord St. Lo. Sooner or later, you will find that we are

right, and that you are in error. Sift the matter as you like, but do not rashly condemn us. At all events, come and see him. Lord and Lady St. Lo may give you fuller information. You must not leave the country without seeing them."

CHAPTER XVII.

As I walked with Temple towards the station, after Colonel O'Malley had turned off by a path across the cliffs, I learned that he had been in that part of the country for nearly a fortnight, amusing himself with such field-sports as it afforded in the autumn, and taking, it was said, an active part in the management of Lord St. Lo's affairs, which had fallen more and more into disorder. Temple and he had not had much intercourse, though they sometimes met upon the beach, where the Colonel went to bathe, and the coast-guard men would often lend a hand in launching his boat, if he wished to put off to the yacht; but he was not a favourite with them. Among Lord St. Lo's tenantry he was still more unpopular; the harsh measures lately dealt out to them, and the long absence of the family from Dunleary, being attributed to his influence.

Much as the heartless gaieties at the Castle had formerly been condemned, it was worse to

have the place deserted, and large sums of money wrung from the exhausted property to be transmitted to a foreign country. The discontent which had been long growing up could not find its full vent when the people saw their old master again among them, with his once noble form and strikingly handsome countenance bowed down and altered by infirmity; but it broke out towards the guest whose anomalous position in the family awakened hearty indignation. Lord St. Lo, though his wandering remarks showed that he frequently failed to recognise the persons who called upon him, either for pleasure or business, courteously received them all, and then turned over the more serious matters under deliberation, or the task of entertaining them, to his wife and Colonel O'Malley. Dark and haughty, the visitor at Dunleary dismissed complaints,—cut short with military dogmatism all applications for the redress of long-standing grievances. Lady St. Lo made the state of the Earl's health a reason for declining to exercise the lavish hospitality which was the fashion of the country; and the dissatisfied individuals of all classes, who had flocked, with the readiness of Irishmen, to welcome the family home, went hungry and malcontent away.

Though I would not go there at Colonel

O'Malley's bidding, I could not refuse a pressing invitation, sent to me by Lord St. Lo, as soon as he knew that I was in the country; and from time to time, during my short stay, I visited him at Dunleary. There was something affecting in the urbanity of his manners, reminding me, as every word and gesture constantly did, of the time when his kindness had so greatly augmented my scanty stock of boyish pleasures. Now, as then, he was invariably hospitable and good-natured; and, in my case, if I would have accepted the favours he offered, his good intentions were warmly seconded. Lady St. Lo was pointedly courteous, and Colonel O'Malley paid to me every attention that lay in his power.

I did not, at that time,—I scarcely now understand their motives,—but I profoundly distrusted them both. The old Earl was my sole attraction to Dunleary. Though, at first, he seemed clearly to remember me, yet his ideas on the subject were extremely vague and indistinct. Sometimes he would mistake me for my father, and question me closely respecting the first Countess St. Lo's malady; asking me how long she might live, and whether I really considered the climate of The Cedars prejudicial to her case. Then, again, his thoughts wandered to his daughter, and to the little boy under her charge there; but, on this point, his

impressions were so confused that it was difficult to trace them to their source.

There was not the slightest appearance, now, of the idolatrous worship which he had paid, in the early years of his second marriage, to his beautiful wife. He was always uneasy in her presence, and lived, for the most part, alone in his own apartments, which formed one wing of the Castle. None of her children were suffered on any pretence to enter these rooms. It was said that their intrusion had once brought on a fearful burst of passion, so nearly resembling insanity, that their mother believed their lives were threatened, and had since entirely withdrawn them.

Visitors at the Castle generally saw the old nobleman for a few moments. He maintained his authority nominally as master of the house, and always gave the most lavish orders for their entertainment, but he was much too feeble to carry his own wishes into practice. Colonel O'Malley, in spite of his professions of regard, never, to my knowledge, trespassed upon his host's privacy ; but, outside the Earl's limited domain, his will was law.

Very often tears would roll down the Earl's wasted cheek as he talked to me of The Cedars, mixing up, in inextricable confusion, images of the past and present. Names especially puzzled him. The little boy was some-

times "Damian," at others "My son Adolphus;" but never, by any accident, did he appear to regard him as one of the present Countess St. Lo's children. He constantly urged me to be careful of him, not to trust to his step-mother, and, above all, to regard his restoration to health as an object of paramount importance.

"Don't allow him to stop at The Cedars through November, Mr. Frankland. The place is damp, especially at the fall of the leaf—the death of the year, as you expressed it, the other day. Her ladyship has been decidedly worse lately. Damian has her constitution—very nervous and excitable: like his sister—like all our children. That poor, dear fellow, who lies under the salt water, had it too! We can't take too much care of Damian."

His dead son's name, thus tenderly pronounced, affected me. When I tried to set him right, he said:—

"Ah! well, yes, Adolphus, is it so? I don't recollect it. I am sure he was to be called Damian. All the Lord Dunlearys have been named Damian. Why did they alter it? It is mine, and was his grandfather's name. The Cedars won't know him without it. Those fine old trees! Don't let them be cut down when I am gone. Are they all standing?"

I reassured him, saying that no one could wish to lay low the pride of the place, and that I had left them in great beauty.

“Does the boy value them?” he said, suddenly. “That is the most important consideration. Honoria always loved them; but then she is only a girl—her mother’s daughter, to the heart’s core! Sons are to be considered first. Tell me about Damian! Is he strong enough to play about? My eldest son! will he live to disappoint those who are hoping for his death? I hope so!—I most sincerely trust he may!”

It seemed useless to disturb him again about the mistake he constantly made as to the name and identity of the child; and I answered him by giving an account of the great improvement which had lately taken place in the little boy’s health, which I particularly attributed to the devoted attention paid to him by his sister.

“She is a noble girl!” he said, after listening with much interest. “Some day or other she will be rewarded for her generous love for her brothers. More of a parent to them than I have been, Mr. Frankland! So, you never married? Upon my soul, I honour you! Your boys are grown up to manhood, and one of them—I saw him in Ireland—very like you. Let them have the shooting, and take care the game is strictly preserved.

The stock must be kept up ; all my boys are fond of sport, Damian particularly. He is a capital shot ; six feet high, and as strong as a lion. He'll stand this damp atmosphere better than his poor mother ; and, I trust, will marry and live at The Cedars. It should go down to his son, and his son's son, after him."

Thus he would ramble on ; and, painful as it was to listen, he yet seemed to find so much pleasure in talking to me, and in dwelling on these confused reminiscences, that I often went to see him, and, each day, my visit lasted longer. Most of the associations of my early youth were linked with Lord St. Lo's presents and favours, and with the thoughts of his daughter which his wandering talk brought up. I liked to hear him speak of the first Countess, of my own father and mother, and of Honoria and her brothers, in the warm language of affection.

Lady St. Lo was often on the watch for me, when I left her husband's apartments, and would carry me off to the garden of the Castle, on the pretence of consulting me as to the state of his intellect. When there, however, walking up and down between the spiked and shining hollies, along the stiff paths of the parterre, she seldom mentioned him. Her manner to me was entirely altered,

and bespoke almost unlimited confidence. She would tell me of the troubles of her life abroad, talk of her children, most of whom were absent, and question me with an interest which scarcely appeared feigned, on my own pursuits and inclinations.

With all the care and expense which she had lavished upon it, formerly, that garden was but a barren plot of ground, after all. The hollies had not grown many inches since my last visit. The sea-wind blighted them as soon as they rose above the wall, and there were no ripening berries on their branches; only the cold, green, sparkling, prickly leaves, that pierced you if you touched them.

Even so, lavish upon me what civilities she might, the Countess St. Lo was still cold and ungenial. A caustic remark now and then pierced me to the quick. The words I had liked to hear from her husband, rambling and illogical as was his discourse,—the mention of The Cedars, of my parents,—most especially of Lady Honoria and the little boy,—always annoyed me when pronounced by the beautiful woman gliding haughtily, notwithstanding all her condescension, beside me, and dropping venom mixed with honey, as we passed by the few flowers of the garden as yet unscathed by the first frosts, but mildewed and mouldering under the heavy

autumn rain, and the dashing of the sea-spray.

Nothing surprised me more than the perfect knowledge Lady St. Lo possessed of Lady Honoria's mode of life at 'The Cedars. Every particular of Adolphus's illness, of Captain Fairfax's visit to me, and of my attendance upon the child, was familiar to her. It was very evident that spies had been about us. She did not, however, appear inclined to make any unfavourable comment. If, now and then, an expression chafed my temper, it was casually dropped. In general, her words were well-chosen, considerate, and, towards me, flattering. There did not seem to be the slightest reserve in her manner. My close connexion with the family, and the debt of gratitude which Lord St. Lo spoke of owing to my father, were acknowledged by his wife. There was hardly any return, she said, one day, when parting from me, which they were not both disposed to make.

Colonel O'Malley, though his manner was not usually conciliatory, took equal pains to make himself agreeable to me. We did not, indeed, meet often ; for I never remained longer than I could avoid at Dunleary, after my visit to Lord St. Lo was paid ; but he would sometimes turn and walk with me, when I met him on the bridge, or in his rambles on the

cliffs and shore. On these occasions, he did not shun speaking of his brother, but, with apparent frankness, grappled with the difficulty; confessing that he deeply regretted having concealed Shane's coming back from America, but maintaining that he had done so at first in compliance with his request, and, afterwards, from imagining that the revelation could only lead to fresh distress on the part of Lady Sarah. Mr. O'Malley, at that time, he said, was in a state of health and spirits which made it out of the question to consult him.

Both Lady St. Lo and Colonel O'Malley, though I never saw them together, appeared to hold the same opinion, that Shane was no longer living. The very tenacity with which they clung to this belief, and strove to impress it upon me, disinclined me to credit it. Their mode of naming him always in the past tense, their half-pitying, half-contemptuous expressions, made me earnestly long to produce the fine young fellow they chose to number among the dead, and disappoint whatever calculations they were framing. All the sophistries of the Countess, her subtle questionings respecting the amount of confidence reposed in me by Lady Honoria, her artful way of dwelling upon what she imagined to be the strong interest that bound me to The Cedars, could not make

me so untrue to myself, so unjust to the being I so jealously admired, as to admit the conclusion, to which I sometimes fancied that she wished to bring me, that through Shane O'Malley's death, and the gratitude and partiality of Lady Honoria's family, a way might be cleared for me to a happiness which, if ever, in my wild youthful dreams, it had opened before me, had long since been barred out.

Yet, manfully as I resisted the spell under which she strove to lay me, I felt the force of the enchantress's incantations. Her insinuations that Lady Honoria, in the event of her father's death, would be left peculiarly destitute of protection,—the great embarrassment of the Earl's affairs, which she candidly confided to me,—most of all, what she repeated of Lady Honoria's fervent expressions of attachment to our family, her fondness for Moraston, the constant care she required, were dwelt upon frequently, yet so delicately, that I could not be offended. Even at the moment when she exercised most power over me,—when, as the sea-breeze swept the cliff at Dunleary, or the white-winged birds perched on the ledge of the empty balcony, where I had so often seen Honoria, her form, her face, her voice, were brought before me—another shape rose between us. I remembered the soft accents in which she had told me the sad story of her

wedded love ; and I resolved to keep my mind pure from selfish thoughts, and to do all a man could do to bring her husband back to her.

The wild gusts were rattling the casements, and furling and unfurling the banner displayed, when its master was at home, from the tower at Dunleary, on the day when I called to take leave of Lord St. Lo. I had stayed much longer than I at first intended with Temple ; and even now I felt reluctant to go home. My plans were unsettled. I might, perhaps, go first to London, where I knew that Fairfax was staying. Anything was preferable to returning, without fuller and more definite information, to The Cedars.

The old nobleman was, as usual, alone, cowering over a large fire. There were no books in the room, only newspapers and some pamphlets and reviews, none of which appeared to have been touched. Outside the windows, a wide sweep of rainy sky and dark grey water, flecked with foam, the wind and waves roaring dismally together. On my saying that I was going back to Moraston, the Earl remarked, in his usual courteous way, using phrases I well remembered, — “ You ’ll see the Countess ? aye, aye ! I can trust you, Mr. Frankland, better than myself. Poorthing ! poor thing ! do you think there is no hope of her recovery ? My faith in your skill is un-

limited, quite unlimited!—but send for what advice you like. Once get her through the winter, and I would answer for her doing well, and our son, too;—mother and child, surely I shall not lose them both!”

I tried to bring his thoughts to the present state of things, by naming Lady Honoria and Adolphus, and asking if he had no message to send them; but, for some moments, though he looked at me, he seemed scarcely to follow me, but went on saying—“Mother and child! must I lose them all? one after another!”—and rocking himself in his chair.

“Message?” he said, at last, rousing himself from his reverie. “Yes, to be sure! I have a great many messages to send to her, poor soul!—I only hope she may live long enough to receive them. You don’t think I was wrong to send her to The Cedars?—I hope no one will ever say I neglected her. Your own wife, Mr. Frankland;—see how her health has failed! What a similarity there is in the two cases! and you are such a careful, excellent husband. Except to attend upon the Countess, you seem to me never to leave her. I can’t bear it. Upon my soul, I cannot!—The atmosphere of The Cedars is telling upon me. I must take a run up to town; but I shall be back in a few days, and, I dare say, I shall find her better. I rely on your care.

Are your boys healthy? Damian—Adolphus—what is his name?—gives me a great deal of anxiety. The last of *her* children, except Honoria;—the only boy I have left! What was that you asked me about a message?—Was it Damian who mentioned it?—Yes, certainly!—if it is not giving you too much trouble, I have something with which it would be the greatest possible relief to my mind to charge you.”

His dress, which was always scrupulously neat, was slightly disarranged, as he sought, with trembling hands, for some object concealed under his vest. At last he brought forth a small gold key, and applied it to a writing-case, on which, when I first came in, I had noticed that he was leaning his elbow. Out of this desk he took several papers, some of them consisting of letters on thin foreign paper, and handed them over to me.

“I may not live long, Mr. Frankland. We have not such clever doctors as you are in this part of Ireland. I believe these papers will be much safer with you, or with Honor, than here. I wish I had given them to her sooner. I cannot tell why I did not. Lady St. Lo interfered, as she has done more than once;—not the Countess you attended, but a lady I married in Ireland. You don't know her. I most sincerely wish I had never done so; but

no matter. You had better not mention these writings to her. Just look them over yourself, and take them to England, and tell Honoria to make what she can of them. They concern my son, Lord Dunleary. They ought to have been made public sooner."

He leaned his head on his clasped hands, and did not look up, while, as he requested, and by his manner of giving them to me invited, I inspected the writings. At the first glance I recognised their importance, but I was not prepared to find the marriage-certificate of the poor injured girl, Kate Brand, to be the innermost of these documents. It was enclosed in a letter to the father of her late husband, Lord Dunleary, entreating his protection for the child she left an orphan in a foreign country. On her deathbed, after the birth of her son, she had sent for the British Consul at Lisbon, and, upon his visiting her, had consigned the papers to his charge, to be forwarded to Lord St. Lo.

"There, there! take them to England, Mr. Frankland. Let the Countess have them before she dies!" said Lord St. Lo, suddenly, raising his head and waving his hand impatiently. "It will be a comfort to her, poor thing! in her last moments; and your father, the doctor, the most trustworthy man I ever

met with,—let him see to the rest. Honor will tell you about the little boy,—Damian, no, no ! not Damian,—I wish people ever got the right names ! Adolphus was drowned. I remember that. His mother-in-law never rested till she drove him from home.”

He groaned deeply. Memory was reviving, and bringing sorrow in heavy waves upon him.

“Damian is gone, too. How she always hated those poor lads ! There is only one of my boys left, and she persecutes him. How comes he to be younger than those she calls my children ? I won't own them. Honor is my daughter ; and the little boy—his name ought to be Damian—is Lord Dunleary. He is my son, my heir. See to it, sir ! Let justice be done to him, the moment you get to Moraston.”

I solemnly promised to attend to his wishes, and the old man seemed tranquillised by my fervent assurance. His mind was wandering again back to the days of his faulty youth, when he had left his sweet young wife to perish by slow degrees, neglected, in the gloomy home of her ancestors, attended by my father, for whom he generally mistook me. It was useless to question, and not my part to reproach him ; besides that I believed him

now to be quite incapable of understanding or explaining the foul play that had evidently taken place, and in which, it was to be feared, he had, at least tacitly, shared.

In my hand, I held the documents which were to reinstate Dunleary's son in his rights as the heir of The Cedars. Nothing could be clearer than the statement written in the faint wavering characters of the dying girl whom I had first known as a child at The Knowle, declaring that a marriage, of which the authenticated proof was enclosed, had taken place between herself and Lord Dunleary in Portugal, where she had joined him; and commending their infant to the care of his grandfather. The feeble old man before me, prostrated by mental and bodily infirmity, must, at one time, in his heart, have acknowledged the claim.

It was a relief to me that Lady St. Lo was absent from the Castle that morning. I did not see either her or Colonel O'Malley on my way back to the station, where the carriage I had ordered was waiting for me. My mind was full of the information I had so unexpectedly obtained; but I did not at present think it expedient to mention it to Temple. Over and over again, as I journeyed across the bogs, and past the sea-like waters of Lough Neagh, I read our poor ill-fated

west-country girl's brief narrative. I believed that Lady Honoria would be the first to aid in dispossessing herself of all rights of heirship to The Cedars, in favour of Dunleary's child, if, indeed, it were still in existence.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE last tidings I had received from Fairfax were, that he was still in London, and I fixed upon him, without a moment's hesitation, as the friend most fit to be consulted, and most likely to be interested in a matter which so nearly concerned poor Dunleary. I dared not carry rashly to Lady Honoria intelligence so imperfect as that which I had obtained; and, for many reasons, I considered that the time had arrived when full confidence ought to be reposed in the man who had loved her so long, and, of late, so hopelessly.

Captain Fairfax struck me as being greatly altered, when, after some trouble, I succeeded in finding him at the hotel from which his last letter was dated. His face wore its gravest expression, and his whole time and thoughts, he told me, were occupied with preparations for joining the squadron in the China seas. He had just been appointed to a ship, and cared not, he said, excepting for his mother's

sake, how long it might be before he revisited England.

There were signs of impatience and anger in his countenance, when I mentioned Lord and Lady St. Lo. They were persons, he remarked, of whom he knew little, and wished to know still less. Compassion was thrown away on such a man as the Earl, and contempt too mild a word for the opinion he entertained of the Countess. He should never forget or forgive her for the pain she had inflicted when he last saw her.

He stopped abruptly, while a deep glow mounted to his face: then he added,—

“That is a chapter of my life, Frankland, on which I do not like to dwell. Let us close the book for awhile. When you open it next, I hope there may be stirring deeds—something worth reading and remembering about me—written in its pages. A termination short and pithy, redeeming the wasted time and thoughts recorded in the middle of the volume, before it is shut up for ever.”

He bent over some papers with which I had found him engaged, and the transient colour had left his face when he looked at me again.

“What is it you have come to tell me, Frankland? I see the fear of grieving me working in every line of your visage. Out

with it, man! If it is about *her*, I can scarcely have worse to hear than her mother-in-law intimated to me. What has that she-devil been concocting?"

"I should not think it worth while to listen to her calumnies," I answered, indignantly. "Neither do I think she would venture to slander Lady Honoria to me. But I mistrust her kindness even more than her cruelty, and dislike her in both moods equally. Towards Lord St. Lo my feelings are entirely different. Perhaps, the many kindnesses he showed me in my youth prejudice me in his favour. He is now incapable of acting for himself,—unable to explain his meaning; but I believe him to be anxious to redress a great wrong which has been committed, and of which he has placed the proofs in my hands. I wish to consult you about them."

Fairfax prepared to listen gravely, and still reluctantly. I scarcely know what he expected to hear.

"This feeble old man," I went on,—“so far as I can gather from his incoherent discourse, in which every name and fact is confused and misplaced,—has been wrought upon to conceal the circumstance of a private marriage having taken place between Lord Dunleary and Kate Brand,—the pretty creature who first left her home among our west-

country downs to attend upon Lady Honoria St. Lo, and, some years afterwards, again disappeared from it mysteriously. This is her dying affirmation that she was Dunleary's wife, and that she left a child, which may be still alive; and here are the proper legal proofs of the ceremony having been performed by an English clergyman in Lisbon."

Fairfax's attention was fully roused. He was even agitated, and his hand shook as he took the papers.

"Dunleary's child! This is, indeed, a revelation. We may have reason, truly, to thank that feeble old sinner, if this fact can be established," he said, after perusing the documents. "Do you not see, Frankland, that Lady St. Lo has an all-powerful motive for concealing the existence of this child? Bring him forward, and she and her children must be satisfied with the poor pittance left by gambling and extravagance. The Cedars is settled upon the children of the first marriage. Of late, only that poor girl's fragile life has come between the Countess and her wishes. But I have yet another motive for investigating this matter. For the last two months I have struggled against believing insinuations which, I could not disguise from myself, had a colouring of truth. So different was the bearing of the two women, that I felt

certain the child Lady Honoria bade me reclaim was not Lady St. Lo's. Now, I see it all. Adolphus is Damian's son,—the real Lord Dunleary."

His frank countenance cleared, and he held out his hand to me, congratulating me warmly on the discovery I had made.

"I never could understand," he went on, Lady Honoria's loving her half-brother so passionately. But Dunleary's child would naturally be the dearest object to her on earth. I am almost sorry I accepted this appointment. I wonder whether I should have time to run down, and see how she bears the good news? Frankland, tell me candidly! would you mind sharing this pleasure with me?"

"Not in the least," I answered, "if your gratification at having to impart it were as untinctured with personal feelings as mine; but is it so, Fairfax? Are you not already counting upon Lady Honoria's gratitude for the exertions which I know you are prepared to make? Do you not rejoice in this discovery more because you conceive that it allows you once more to love her, than for the sake of Dunleary and his child?"

"Of course I do!" said Fairfax, with a frank smile. "If you knew what torture that vile woman's inuendoes have occasioned me, you would understand my present delight at

finding that she was framing an artful scheme to mislead me. Her motives are quite easy to read, and her aim of keeping Lady Honoria unmarried, and probably embittering her life so much that death would soon have removed the last stumbling-block in her path, is worthy of her character. I should like to thwart her! and, truly, the way is opening before me. This boy has crafty foes, and will need stalwart protectors. We must brace ourselves for the fight. If I am obliged to leave England, you will act for me in my absence, which need not, I trust, be a long one. A few shots will teach the Mandarins the lesson they have learned once or twice already and forgotten. 'Then, heigho for England!'

His aspect was so joyous, his hopes were evidently so buoyant, that it was a painful task to crush them; but, now, I thought it would be wrong not to confide in him fully; and as I told him the circumstances belonging to Lady Honoria's history, on which the Countess had founded the false assertions to which he had listened,—her marriage with her brother's friend, Shane O'Malley,—the birth and death of their infant child,—and the vague uncertainty which raised alternately the hopes and fears of the friends of the gallant but ill-fated young Irishman, Fairfax's face once more clouded over.

“Then, farewell hope!” he said, bitterly. “At all events, I am glad that I may take the thought of her untarnished with me to the grave. The sooner I sail the better. But, remember! Damian was my friend. Take care of his child, and, if my purse can be of service in this cause, use it freely. I would spend the last farthing I have in the world to circumvent Lady St. Lo. I believe her star is setting, while the pale planet that rules the destinies of the motherless children she has oppressed is in the ascendant. Only yesterday, I was one of a court-martial sitting in judgment on Harcourt’s case. Have you heard that he has lost his ship, the first to which he has been appointed since he brought several of the officers of the Hogue to trial, and caused the young fellow you have named, Shane O’Malley, to be dismissed the service? Though he carried his point at that time, his sagacity and judgment have always been severely questioned, and he has lived at ease in England unnoticed. Now, when it is of vital importance to have good men and true to fight our battles, this precious Government of ours singles him out, because his brother has two boroughs at his disposal, and sends him in one of the very first ships dispatched to the seat of war. Harcourt, eager to justify their selection, exceeded his orders, and—with

a mixture of pride and passion which, when they once inflate his weak mind, rob him of the possession of his senses,—acting, as was made clear to us, contrary to the advice of experienced seamen—ran his ship, in a gale of wind, on a reef of rocks which none but a fool or a madman would have ventured near in such foul weather. A Dutch steamer picked him up and part of his crew, who had taken to their boats, and he is come home a disgraced man for life. Through his ignorance and incapacity, a first-rate line-of-battle ship is lost to the country, just at the time she was most needed. In the inquiry made into his conduct, such traits of disposition have been brought to light, that the only wonder is, men could be found to sail with such a captain. His character is well known at the great seaport towns, and one reason of the ship's foundering appears to have been that she was undermanned, so many of the crew having deserted at the Cape, on their way out, that there were not enough able seamen to work the vessel, the pumps of which are of some new-fangled construction, imperfectly understood by the sailors. He will never be employed again."

"I am glad to hear it," I said, "and I accept the augury as a favourable one. But you have not advised me how to proceed in this

matter. We may be convinced that the boy now at The Cedars is the son of Damian, Lord Dunleary; but if the Countess maintains, as I have not the slightest doubt she will, that he is her own child, how can we prove his identity? No court would take Lord St. Lo's evidence."

Fairfax mused in silence for several moments.

"There is one man, and only one, who can help us," he said, at last, "and he is a long way off—Captain Salcombe. Don't you remember that he was in command of Colonel O'Malley's yacht, the *Mayflower*, when Lord and Lady St. Lo came on board,—that he took them to Spain and Portugal, touching at several ports, and was much incommoded by the lady's fancies? He may know something about this matter, since the child must have been born in the course of that summer. Salcombe is a clear-sighted, truthful man; not one, I should imagine, easily to be blinded. If he has not gone to the bottom of the sea in that crazy old hulk, the *Alacrity*, I will see him at the Cape, and learn all that he knows or conjectures respecting his fair freight. I remember that he spoke of the Countess very far from affectionately."

Fairfax had somewhat recovered his spirits,

at the prospect of gaining at least one object of his wishes. I thought myself that Salcombe might help us, but our difficulties were many and great. Lady St. Lo would, I was certain, oppose unscrupulously every attempt to do justice to Dunleary's child ; and the deception which I believed her to have practised made it vitally important to her to prolong the error. Her own reputation was staked upon the matter ; since, if Adolphus was not her child,—and Fairfax's conviction on this point was not less fixed than my own,—a fearful amount of falsehood and duplicity must be brought to light.

There was nothing to delay Fairfax's preparations for departure, now that he cared little for imparting to Lady Honoria tidings which, however gladly or even rapturously they might be received, could, under existing circumstances, win him nought but gratitude. Absence and stirring employment, to which he now looked forward impatiently, might bring him a cure ; or, as in his secret soul he, perhaps, still believed, work such a change in her feelings as might once again enable him, with better prospects of success, to press his suit.

There was no sort of proof, he unalterably maintained, of Shane's existence ; and it would be cruel to mention to Lady Honoria the possibility of his being alive. On this point, our opinions differed. Even hope deferred—sus-

pense—ultimate disappointment—could not, to my mind, be worse than the dull stagnation in which she at present existed. Besides, the bright side of the shield turned ever towards me. In a thousand ways, each one more fanciful, and perhaps less probable than the last, I pictured Shane's return to one whose constant heart, I was certain, would otherwise always bleed for him. After many arguments, my friend was forced to leave it to be decided by circumstances and my own judgment, how much or how little of what I knew should be revealed to Lady Honoria, on my return to Moraston. We travelled down to Portsmouth together, that I might see his ship. The wind was favourable, and I left him on the point of sailing.

CHAPTER XIX.

I WAS spending the last hour of daylight, after I came ashore, in a ramble over Southsea Common, before betaking myself to the inn whence the west-country coach started in the morning, when my attention was attracted by two handsome, riotous little boys, of about four and six years of age, whom the lady they accompanied was vainly striving to keep in order. The sturdy rogues ran hither and thither, pelting each other in jest, which often degenerated into quarrelling in earnest, when sound cuffs were exchanged which showed their strength of limb, as fully as their shouts and laughter betokened vigorous lungs and untamed animal spirits. Almost every passer-by turned to look at them with a smile ; but their mother—as the delicate, over-anxious lady who was with them appeared to be—was quite distressed at the inutility of her efforts to make the noisy little rascals behave better. As I came nearer I perceived that the pretty, pale face and soft

voice belonged to Salcombe's interesting, lady-like wife.

She received me with unfeigned pleasure, as I believe she would have done any friend of her absent husband. Besides this, we had been much together while she was leading a retired life on that wild, sea-beaten coast of Antrim. The youngest of her children was my godson and namesake, born during his parents' residence abroad, while Salcombe was out of employment; the eldest, my old acquaintance, the baby. Their mother introduced them both to me with pride, saying that they were just like their father. She never could keep them out of the salt-water, and from the first moment they could speak, they had avowed their intention of being sailors.

My scarcely-understood relationship to my godson had a somewhat sobering effect, and the boys walked demurely home with us;—Mrs. Salcombe having, with little difficulty, persuaded me to spend the evening at her lodgings, instead of passing it in solitude at the hotel.

Her own health, she said, had been rather stronger lately, but she felt very keenly the separation from her husband. Active duties afloat suited him better, undoubtedly, than the wearing service of a lieutenant in the coast-guard; yet she sorely missed seeing him come

home, if it were only for a few hours, and would give the world to have him ashore again.

The boys were almost too great a charge for her, she remarked, after separating them for the twentieth time, while they lay kicking and screaming on the floor together. She often thought of the time when she was first married, and could not endure the noise of the parrot. It was nothing to that of the children, when their father encouraged their wild spirits, and enjoyed as much as the boys did the rough games he taught them.

There was no chance of holding much conversation before eight o'clock, when the maid-servant, fortunately a stout Hampshire lass, carried them off, in defiance of their struggles, to bed. Fanny's domestic noises had made her less susceptible to out-of-door sounds, for the lodging she now occupied, by her own choice, faced the water. We heard the roar of the sea, mingled, for some time, with the voices and laughter of the children.

Mrs. Salcombe and I talked of my visit to her and her husband in Ireland, when I had received so warm a welcome at their tiny cottage. She described to me in glowing colours the pleasant life she had led, during the time Captain Fairfax regarded as thrown away, when Salcombe, free from claims of duty,

was residing with her at a small continental sea-port town. He had taken a fancy to the place, and thought that it would suit her and the baby, when he was lying off the coast in Colonel O'Malley's yacht, the *Mayflower*. The living was cheap and the climate delightful, both being essential considerations, and, upon resigning the command of the vessel, her husband had taken her with him to Santander.

The mention of Colonel O'Malley's yacht reminded me of Fairfax's impression, that Salcombe was likely to have it in his power to give us some useful intelligence respecting the cruise he had taken in her when Lord and Lady St. Lo were on board. Mrs. Salcombe coloured a little, as she observed,—

“My husband did not like the party. There was no end to the trouble they gave him. Sometimes the Countess was ill, and then the boat was sent ashore, in the very roughest weather, in quest of delicacies which often were not procurable. When her health improved, she often insisted on landing, at any hazard or inconvenience. Harry never knew what they would be doing from one day to another, when he should have to put to sea, or what preparations to make. He always said that, from first to last, Colonel O'Malley had reposed no confidence in him. Salcombe is not a reserved person, you know, and any

body who wishes him to be obliging should treat him frankly. Now, the whole party, he complained, were full of mystery."

Mrs. Salcombe hesitated; then, seeing that I was interested, she went on, after a momentary silence,—“Poor thing! perhaps he did not make sufficient allowance for her,—I mean the Countess,” she said, compassionately. “She must have suffered terribly, for the vessel was small, and the accommodation circumscribed for ladies. It was much better for her to land when she did, at Lisbon, and not too soon; though Harry did not like being kept from week to week, he was not told why, lying idle in the Tagus. When the Countess came back to the yacht, nearly a month afterwards, she had a little infant with her. My husband was very much annoyed, and said he would never have taken charge of the vessel, if he had understood that he was to have ladies and babies, and a whole nursery establishment on board. Lady St. Lo is not a favourite of his. I am sure, if it had been one of the poorest women in the world, he would have been kind and considerate to her and the child, and not have minded what trouble they gave him; but he took some strange fancy into his head about the Countess’s baby, and declared that she never behaved to it like a mother.”

“Salcombe is not the only person who is of that opinion,” I said. “I should like to ask him what he noticed to give him this impression so early. Lady St. Lo is said never to have treated this child like the rest.”

“Oh, you should not listen to such gossip!” Fanny exclaimed, warmly,—“it is quite impossible that a mother should not love her youngest child. I fancied, once, that no baby could be so dear to me as the first; but, when Charley came, I spoilt him just as much as Harry. He seemed to need it most. I used to be quite angry with my husband for being so severe about the Countess, whom I remembered with her beautiful children at Dunleary. We were not acquainted, of course; but it gave me an interest in any little thing he told me about her. You know, he does not stand much on ceremony, and he could not help telling her, before he came away, that he did not think the child’s attendant bestowed enough care upon it. Lady St. Lo stared at him haughtily, as if she considered it a liberty in him to be so officious, but the Earl thanked him warmly. Altogether, however, after his quarrel with Colonel O’Malley, Salcombe was very glad to leave them. Even the coast-guard service—and you know how he hated that—was preferable.”

“I am glad he is sailing his own ship now,

and, I trust, in the way to still better fortune," I said. "When do you expect him home?"

"That is quite uncertain. He was to return after landing the troops, but I have only heard twice from him on his voyage out, and am beginning to be very anxious for the news of his safe arrival at the Cape," answered his wife, while she opened her desk, and sought for his last letter, in which, she remembered, my name was mentioned. "I do believe, in spite of what every one else tells me of her, my husband thinks there is not a better ship afloat than the *Alacrity*. He is so sanguine, and never sees any fault or deficiency when he first undertakes a thing. Then, when difficulties arise, he is disappointed, and his spirits sink as low as they have previously been buoyant. You shall read what he tells me of his passage to St. Helena. I am sure, though at first they got on tolerably, he did not expect to be obliged to put into port so often."

Salcombe's letter fully justified his wife's observations. The *Alacrity* might have been supposed the finest vessel in the service, if her new commander's report were incautiously accepted; but, on a closer examination, it appeared that her rate of sailing in the Channel was not to be taken as the measure of her course across the Atlantic. There had been a good deal of grumbling and discontent on

the part of the troops, who complained that the old ship would have been better cut down to serve as a hulk in Portsmouth harbour ; but then soldiers never were satisfied. They had weathered more than one awful storm, with only the loss of a few spars, on the other side of the Azores, and, by the blessing of Providence, were now safe in the harbour of James Town ; whence, if he could get some trifling but necessary repairs completed, he trusted to sail again, in four or five days, for the Cape. On his way out, Salcombe had put into port at Madeira, and one of the first persons he came across at Funchal was the extraordinary old man from whom he had once endured such a broadside of abuse, when, in the discharge of his duty, he had searched the farm-house called The Knowle, near Moraston, for smuggled spirits. The old fellow's impudence had carried him through the ordeal, though, as Salcombe still asserted, he had a good cargo stowed away, all the time. He was not in a better humour now, and had discharged a volley of oaths at the authorities who had kept him waiting for some information he wished to procure. Charles Frankland would, my friend thought, have been considerably amused if he had witnessed their meeting, entirely unexpected as it was by both parties.

After his first burst of impatience was

exhaled, the old seaman became more civil. Salcombe thought him humanised, and was sorry for him, as he appeared to be in great trouble. He had crossed the seas to trace out the fate of a poor girl, his own near relative, who had left her country-home to follow a lover ; and he had discovered that she died, leaving a child, at Lisbon. The fate of this infant was still a mystery, and the sailor's honest pride was deeply wounded. He had shown to Salcombe a letter with which I had furnished him, to the British Consul, and had told him that, upon finding this functionary was gone to Madeira for his health, he had followed him thither, but found that he had died of the cholera, which was then raging. My friend had procured for the seaman a passage in a homeward-bound vessel.

Mrs. Salcombe promised, that when her husband returned to England they would both visit me at Moraston. Her own anticipations were not all *couleur de rose*, and she had plenty of good-natured friends ready and willing to communicate to her and corroborate the unfavourable reports current with the public concerning the demerits of the Alacrity. Nevertheless, she had good faith in her husband's skill and devotion to the service, and we trusted that, under his command, the vessel might make one good passage before, like other

faithful servants past work, she broke down in the vain attempt to perform tasks for which age and rotten timbers are equal disqualifications, or was laid up in ordinary, like other state-pensioners.

My life at Moraston seemed almost like a dream to me, when at last I found myself at home. Each moment I expected to be awakened from it by some startling occurrence ; and yet I disliked to disturb its tranquillity prematurely. Lady Honoria and the little boy, who was in a better state of health than at one time I had hoped to see him attain, received me so affectionately that I felt how much, in that quiet place, my absence had been regretted. Pressing engagements crowded upon me, and every hour and minute was busily occupied.

Aunt Margery, at my request, had been staying at the old house most of the time I was away, having left one of her nieces to take care of her invalid sister. It was the first visit she had paid there since my father's death, and we both felt considerable pain at meeting ; but she had fallen into her accustomed ways before I came home, and it was

very pleasant to me to see her in her former place, at the head of my small establishment.

There were tones in her voice, and a rustle in the stiff folds of her dress, when she moved about, which so forcibly reminded me of my boyhood, that it required a moment's thought to tell me how much of youth was gone. More especially when I saw her with Lady Honoria, who had looked to her for advice and comfort while I was away, the old time came back to me strangely. One of the first things told me by my aunt was that the rough sailor, Kate Brand's uncle, had returned to The Knowle. He was more surly than ever, and had been less than civil when Mrs. Margaret Frankland, with whom he was not a favourite, had seen him prowling about the churchyard and our garden, and demanded what was his business. My aunt thought it a sacred duty to take up even the prejudices of those she loved; and she remembered that my father had disliked the man extremely. It did not make the difference it should have done in her estimation, that he had led a respectable life since he came back from sea, and had provided for his nephews, besides consulting, on all essential points, his mother's comfort. He was a rude, ill-conditioned fellow, who used bad language, and said that physic was humbug. No good could be expected from him.

I had not been at home more than a day or two when Matthew Brand found me out. I met him crossing the churchyard on his way to my house, one afternoon, when I was returning from The Cedars. A broad path led between the tall, straight stems of the elm-trees, past the grave where we had both seen the octogenarian farmer of The Knowle laid by the side of his second son. Matthew was standing bareheaded, reading the inscription on his father's tombstone.

"Hold hard, Master Charles!" he said, saluting me, in sailor-like fashion, "you are about the only person in these parts I'd care to see. The old lady is a tight hand, and I'd just as soon say what's on my mind here among the dead people, where the ground is common to all the parish, as upon your quarter-deck, when, perhaps, as it was last time, the women-folk have rubbed down the planks till they shine like wax. Mrs. Margery might say I was not wanted. Look here!—I'm a plain man, and this is a short story. You can see the sun shining aloft through the trees, and hear the boatswain—no, hang it!—the storm-cock's whistle. Well, here, by the old man's grave, I tell it to our shame, that poor girl, who used to be as blithe as the throstles in the spring, came to her death by foul means, in a foreign country. I've seen her grave, with

just a stick or two of burnt-up timber about it, such as grows in those arid places ; and I've heard, more than I like to tell, of what brought that sloop aground before it was well under weigh ; — scarce out of dock, you may say, and with a voyage half way round the world, and back again, before her. There's not a doubt about it. Kate's regularly under water, name and fame ! and, what's worst of all, poor lass ! she was left to run her last course under jury-masts, without a pilot, — her hatches left open, and a lee-shore dead in front, on which she split and went down head foremost. That's all there is to enter in the books about her ; — but, Master Charles, what has become of her child ? I scarce like to name it ; but, since the little boat rode out the gale that sank the ship, I think it my duty, under Providence, if I can find the craft, to haul it up on dry land, and give it a name, and, in fact, see to it till it's fit for launching."

The man turned his head away, quickly, as if unwilling to meet my eye ; but, then, his glance fell on the low headstone which he had himself had put up to mark the resting-place of Kate's mother, once the object of his aversion.

"If she had kept her tender alongside of her, that frigate wouldn't have gone down !" he said, sorrowfully. "It was all along of

being so venturesome that the gale struck her. Howsomever, we must do the best we can, and I've brought that old mother of mine down from her stilts, and made her listen to reason. I should have liked you to hear how the wind whistled through the rigging, when I first dropped a hint to that old captain of mine on *The Knowle* about poor Kate's baby. She swore she'd never see it, nor believe it was her grandchild; but she has hauled down her colours now, and I caught her crying about it, the last time it was mentioned. I've sailed past that headland long ago, Master Charles; and, though it goes against me naming it at first to a stranger, I've got used to thinking of it, —yes, and am longing to hold in my arms the last chip of that rough old block we saw laid in the ground yonder. The old woman saw it at last, too, as I did, and has come round; and we are ready to take the child, and do our best for it, living, and provide for it, dying, if we can but find it out."

"I believe I can help you, my old friend, in your righteous endeavour," I said; "but you must have patience. Tell me what you have heard and seen in your travels."

"That's a hard matter, Master Charles, when a man has his eyes closed, and his ears shut, and his heart dead to all but one feeling that's knocking against it, night and day, and

won't let him rest. However, you've been a traveller in your time, and know well enough what we came across on the high seas; so I'll just stick to the point. It was all true enough that poor Kate had brought to in the Tagus; and I soon made out her bearings, right away among the hills, where, if all had been fair sailing, I'd not mind to cast anchor myself awhile. But I had hard duty to do on shore, just the sort of work I like least; still I didn't shirk it, and it left me hard-up on dry land, with the poor girl's grave to look at, and not a friend near; and news I scarce liked to bring back with me. I'm ashamed to make a fool of myself, this fashion!" he continued, while the tears fairly ran over his rough cheeks; "but, when I think of that dainty lass, that couldn't bear a hard word, having to shift for herself, and knowing that she was dying, and leaving her baby among strangers,—I can't help it. First of all, I discovered that Kate was forsaken; that the villain who lured her away from us did not come near her for months; and she cried, and got weaker and weaker, till at last news reached her that her lover was dead. Then she made out her papers,—as a man might do before sailing,—and gave them to the woman she lodged with to take to the British Consul. There's some sense in that,

for such a fine figure-head to carry, if I'm not mistaken! I tacked right about, and cast anchor at the Consul's,—the gentleman to whom you wrote a letter for me. He had not received it, however, for there was a screw loose in the hold, and the doctors—they always had a spite against me!—had sent him away to recruit. Then I set to work again, pumping and pumping, as if I and the whole ship's crew were going to perdition. The people in the house at Cintra, where poor Kate died, said that, a couple of months afterwards, the young woman's friends (I should like to know that she'd one in the world besides myself and her old grandmother!) had come up the country, and taken the child away with them. The foreigners never thought to hinder it, nor to make out what shore they were bound to, or what flag the vessel carried that bore off Kate's last treasure. It was like being at sea without chart or compass, and not even a star that I was used to shining in heaven to guide me."

The man stopped, with the bitterness of disappointment in his tone. I had not interrupted him, though I doubted not poor Kate's statement was in my possession. I wished him to tell his story in his own way. Presently he resumed, more cheerfully,—

"Fair and soft, Master Charles!—but, if

that won't do, we'll trice up the hammocks, and beat to quarters! I'll have that child under the roof-tree of 'The Knowle' before I'm a year older. Since I came home, I've been overhauling the women's kits to see if I could find any old letters that would show a light in this dark night that's come over us. I don't see my bearings yet, but I'll make them out before I've done. What else have the old dame and I to live for? The young'uns—plaguy little rascals they were!—are all put out in the world; and we want this little varmint to keep us alive. The old place is as dull as a quarantine station, with the yellow flag flying over it. One would think we'd got plague or fever on board, for nothing younger and livelier than ourselves ever comes near us."

I was truly sorry for the old fellow, who in his rough way did not lack kindness.

"Be of good heart, Matthew," I said; "some intelligence has reached me, upon which we must both act, but not rashly. I have heard that a young child, about the age of poor Kate's, was taken on board a vessel at Lisbon, commanded by a friend of mine, four years ago. We will make inquiries about it. Meanwhile, come to 'The Cedars,' to-morrow afternoon, and ask for me. Lord St. Lo's daughter, who once paid you a visit at 'The Knowle,' is there, and will be glad to see you."

Matthew looked up, at first doubtfully, then with a keen, sanguine expression, and touching his cap, as he uttered an "Aye, aye, Master!" full of obedient alacrity, left the churchyard.

CHAPTER XX.

WHEN I reached The Cedars, the next afternoon, I found that Lady Honoria and the little boy were gone with Duncan Geddes, the forester, to the platform at the upper end of the beech-wood walk to see a fine ship which was passing up Channel. A message had been left, in case I called, inviting me to follow them. As I went, somewhat slowly, through the plantations still gleaming redly with the last foliage of the dying year, I thought that the time was come when I could no longer delay acquainting Lady Honoria with all that I knew or surmised respecting Shane O'Malley and Damian's child. The melancholy tranquillity in which she lived at The Cedars, not unlike the mellow radiance that hung upon the dropping leaves, and was refracted from the amber carpet of the beech-wood through which I was passing, must be disturbed. Faintly, as I walked along, there reached my ear the sound of the sea and of the winter wind, excluded from that sheltered

place. I scarcely liked to let in the ruder blasts from the outer world upon that charmed solitude.

Matthew Brand was standing close to Lady Honoria on the platform, looking through the large telescope which was fixed there in front of the summer-house. I thought that her slight form appeared more fragile, and her face paler than usual, in contrast to the sturdy frame and weather-beaten countenance of the seaman. At a short distance, Duncan Geddes was playing with Adolphus, taking part in the little fellow's infantine sport with as much zest as if he had been himself a boy, instead of a rough-bearded man. Not one of the party noticed my approach.

It was easy to see what it was that so riveted the attention of the seaman, and of her whose gentle breast had always a quick pulse beating in unison with the wild measure of the ocean waves. Every now and then the child, too, stopped in his play, pointing with his finger, as he questioned Geddes, to the large, beautiful ship, gliding majestically past the coast, with her wings of white canvas filled by the favouring wind, and rising from the water's edge to the top of her aspiring masts. Dark clouds hung over the sea and blackly shadowed the water; but the heavens

were brightened by vivid gleams of partial sunlight, and the gloomy masses of heaving billows caught the radiance upon the parallel ridges of their foamy crests.

The thick grove of pine and beech which clothed the ascent of the hill and crowned its summit, sheltered the platform from the strong westerly wind that ruffled the waves of the Channel. That group of trees on land, rising from a commanding knoll in the Earl's park, was a well-known mark for the sailors;—one of those several objects remembered during many a tedious voyage, which, on his return to old England, bring visions of home to the mariner's eye and heart. Doubtless, there were many on board that stately ship who knew and recollected The Cedars.

As I came up behind them, I heard the child's eager tones addressing his companion, mingled with the rougher accents of the sailor.

“Aye, aye!—there's not a doubt of it—that's the old Diomed, sure enough. She's been baptized over again with the salt-water lately; but I don't hear that they've changed her name. I never slept easier than when I had a berth on board. It was sharp work, to be sure, as it always should be; but no man was expected to do more than his duty; and, when that was over, he might take his pipe or his grog in peace. At least it was so when I

belonged to the ship, and I dare say it is so now. It all hangs on the Captain's pleasure. He's as much a king as e'er a one in Europe that sits upon a throne, when his pennant flies on board his ship; and they've got the right sort of man over them now. I didn't much like him, when he was lieutenant, down to Moraston station; but they say the salt-water agrees with him better than land, and makes him more even-tempered. He's got his rank, at last, as commander in the navy, and is bringing home the ship that he saved from foundering off the Mauritius."

While he spoke the vessel tacked and wore slowly round, the delicate lines of her spars and rigging crossing the white sails as she changed her course. By this time Matthew was aware of my presence.

"Is that you, Master Charles?" he said, touching his cap. "I'm glad you're in time to get sight of her. You won't see the likes of that ship every day. She's a regular beauty to look at. Just see how light and easy she sits upon the water; it might be one of our own swans in the decoy; and yet, two months ago, every living soul that was aboard of her was saying what prayers they could muster, and looking to go down into the yawning troughs the sea opened for them. I heard the news as I came up street, and it's the Doctor's

old crony, Captain Salcombe, that's bringing her home. He that searched The Knowle for smuggled goods once, and put my old mother in a fury. No boat could sail across her track for a week after, without being made to lie to, or having a shot fired into her bows. Well, I'm willing to own I'm wrong when it's borne in upon me, and I won't maintain I hav'n't said things better left unspoken about your father, too. The folks among the hills miss him, and swear by his nostrums; though, hang me if I'd swallow them! Captain Salcombe is a kind-hearted man in his way, and wouldn't let the poor fellow that was pining in his hammock for a sight of home die without his old father's blessing. I've been watching the ship since daybreak, and saw the signal run up, but couldn't make it out, so I got myself under weigh and made right for the station, where the coast-guard men were all clustering like so many mackerel-boats looking out for a shoal in the offing; and told me 'twas for a boat to put off from the buildings that the signal was hoisted. There was a man on board that wanted to come ashore."

"Do you mean that yonder gallant ship is the one supposed to be lost, with all her complement of stores and ammunition, off the Mauritius, when Captain Harcourt was in

command of her?" I said, looking with increased interest at the vessel, as I remembered Fairfax's account of the disaster which had befallen her.

"Yes, that's Harcourt's ship, bad luck to him!" said the seaman, vindictively; while Lady Honoria, at the mention of the name, turned yet paler than she had been before. "He'll get his deserts yet, some day, when a court-martial is held, — I won't say when or where, — at which his privileges won't shield him. There will be the brave fellows that wanted to stand by the ship to the last, when their craven Captain ran her on a rock in broad daylight, and left her sticking there: Little they got for their pains but oaths and curses, — language that's fittest for the pit of doom, and will sound there for ever in the ears of those who used it. But, look ye, Master Charles, though it was ruled that all man could do had been done before the good ship that cost the nation stores of gold was left to perish, as soon as it got whispered about at Cape Town that Harcourt had done less than his duty, other officers volunteered to do more than theirs, with honest hands and willing hearts to help them, such as are found wherever England's flag flies at the main. Captain Salcombe was out with his ship at the Cape, and he and his blue-jackets offered to get the Diomed off the rocks. He'd do it, he

told the Admiral, if he'd the Alacrity's crew, and a steamer to help him; and he was as good as his word. They went at it like lions; and there was one fine lad, I knew well, among them, that took more than his share of work. Little right had he to love the country that had slighted him, or the service from which he was cast adrift, but he came back to serve her in any way, however humble, rather than desert his colours. And he has served her now! He had a first-rate education, and passed his intervals of leisure in learning the profession that used him so scurvily; so he knew more than his Captain about the manner in which the pumps worked, and other intricate parts of the new machinery; and it's mainly owing to his skill that the fine ship we saw pass by under full sail isn't rotting under salt-water thousands of miles away. 'There she is, making her way before the wind, to tell her own story, and bring disgrace and ruin on the man that took her into danger, and hadn't nerve even to try to get her out of it!'

I felt the small hand which had been laid upon my arm for support tremble, as the old seaman's impetuous language brought back painful reminiscences. To me, there was more than I could at once fathom in his remarks, but I dared not at present question him minutely.

"The poor fellow who was landed from

the ship had his share, no doubt, in her rescue," I said, willing to divert Lady Honoria's thoughts. "I should like to hear his own account of all that he has seen and done since he left Moraston station."

"It's worth while to have a son drowned, or next door to it, once in a way," Matthew answered, warmly, "to get such a treat as it was to old Hallett, — he that was chief boatman once, and is now superannuated, but sometimes does a good day's work, still, when the rheumatics will let him, — when he saw that it was his own boy Fred come back again. He went as the Lieutenant's servant to Ireland, when Mr. Salcombe was ordered away from this station; and was reported drowned off the coast of Antrim in a stiff gale, when he'd put off with other brave fellows to aid a distressed vessel. No one ever thought to hear more of him, till last summer, when news came that it was all a mistake, and he was alive and well, and going to sea with Captain Salcombe in the *Alacrity*. Still, the old man could scarce make up his mind he should ever live to see him again. There he was to-day, however, sick enough; never having got over the yellow-fever he caught at New Orleans, where he was forced to wait for time and tide to get off, after one of their confounded 'Nortes' blew the vessel he was

in ashore. He'd been a volunteer in Mexico, trying to win a little money before he came back home, for he hadn't a penny to bless himself with when he first got to America; and there he lay in that pestilent hole, month after month, praying for the dear life and for another sight of England. If Providence hadn't raised him up a friend, the poor lad must have died there."

I longed to get Lady Honoria away, but her attention was riveted to the old seaman's narrative. Every word he uttered agitated her, and I dreaded lest the next moment might bring about a revelation which, without preparation, her strength would be unable to bear.

"I have a great mind," I said, "to steal a holiday, though I have been a sad truant lately, and run down to Portsmouth, to see that ship come in. I do not think life will afford me a more gratifying spectacle. What say you to accompanying me, Matthew? You seem greatly interested."

"There are few things I should like better, Master Charles, and I've not much of a kit to trouble you with. She'll be some time working her way up, and I'll be with you at any hour you like to name."

While I made my arrangements with the seaman, Lady Honoria, with her eyes full of

tears, was talking to the child. "Don't cry, Mamma mia!" he said, softly. "The pretty ship will come back again presently. Shall we wait and look out for her?"

"Not so, little Master," said Matthew, turning round and looking, I think for the first time, at the fair child. "There are many poor souls in that great floating house, weary enough of the salt sea, and wanting to get home to their wives and babies. The ship is come back to England from a long way off. We shall not see it pass by here again."

"Will the little boys be glad to see their fathers?" said Adolphus, wonderingly. "I never had one; but, I fancy, if there was one for me in the big ship, I should like him to come home."

Duncan Geddes and Matthew Brand both looked with some surprise at the boy, whom they regarded as the Earl's youngest son.

"The bairn is misguided enough not to mind his parent, sae far awa'," said the forester, gravely. "Leddy, ye must remember, though the love of children is sweet to the heart, it behoves us to keep before them the images of those who should be nearest and dearest. Does he say his prayers night and morn, and not ask God's blessing for father and mother? Be sure you don't let him forget them."

Lady Honoria coloured. "You are right, my good friend," she said, gently. "The child names the Earl and Countess in his prayers; but he is a strange little creature, and perhaps I have humoured him. Ever since he can recollect anything, I have been like a mother to him, and he will not acknowledge that any one else has a nearer relationship. He has been too ill lately for me to thwart him."

"Let the child be!" thundered out Matthew, while the keeper was preparing a grave remonstrance. "He knows best what's good for him, and has instinct to guide him that's surer and safer than book-learning. There's that in his face makes me trust him."

The little fellow seemed inclined to repay his confidence, and to be aware that Matthew took his part, for he prattled on merrily to him and Geddes, as we returned through the beech-wood. I never saw the old fellow so gentle with any human being. Surely, it must have been the gleam of those hazel eyes, so like poor Kate's, that softened his rough nature.

Meanwhile, Lady Honoria walked by my side, silently and slowly. Once or twice she stopped for breath, and said a few words to me, but her utterance was impeded, and

she seemed scarcely able to rally her thoughts into order. She was recalling her young brother, who had sailed with Harcourt and never came home again. Her mind was full of the past, but the ideas which successively presented themselves were, I am sure, rambling and unconnected.

Lady Honoria did not detain me when we reached the Hall. She took the child's little hand, and bidding his rough companions a kindly and courteous farewell, went in-doors at once. I am certain her heart was almost breaking with sorrow, and it cost me a pang to leave her. I could not have resolved upon doing so, if a hope brighter than I dared to allow her to contemplate had not constrained me to meet Salcombe when he landed.

Matthew Brand was as good as his word, and did not keep me waiting for him. In less than a couple of hours we were on our way to see the good ship *Diomed* cast anchor at Spithead.

CHAPTER XXI.

THAT must have been a glorious recompense, Harry Salcombe! for all the years spent in obscurity, in wearing contests with petty despots and harassing responsibilities, when, with England's colours flying, with the thunder of the guns and the cheering of the crowd to welcome her, you brought the old Diomed into Portsmouth harbour! Chary of her rewards to her brave sons, Britain grants them nobly when the great heart of the nation is roused; and in full, free sympathy, from the deep chests of those brawny seamen at the Point, on the jetties, and on board the neighbouring vessels, pealed forth the loud hurrah. Those hearty greetings, unrestrained by any fear of offending against precedent,—the shout that from the strong lungs and warm hearts of thousands rises to heaven, when the deed bravely done claims its tribute of approval from the public is, indeed, an ample guerdon; and such sounds never, to my ear, rang on the air more cheerily than on that

bright December morning ! Take your meed, brave heart !—not without hard labour has it been won. Take it, and rest content. A lifetime spent in energetic toil is not too much to pay for such a welcome home at last. Forget at once the old account run up of ill-requited services !—you *have* discarded that thought long since. Fortune, at length, has been your friend, and given what many a spirit like yours for ever lacks,—the opportunity of distinguishing yourself in a way which England will not be slow to acknowledge. This, however, is your best reward.

Such, or similar to these, were the thoughts with which I witnessed my old friend's triumph. Salcombe did not trouble himself about either the past or the future, but most thoroughly enjoyed the present moment. He was the same man as ever—bustling, active, simple-minded ; and the ship he had rescued from destruction was the very idol of his heart. There was a proud flush on his cheek, a glad light in his eye, as he took me over her, showing me every part minutely, and explaining the measures—crowned, thanks to untiring energy and perseverance, with success—to which he had resorted when he had obtained permission to lighten her, and, if possible, to set her afloat again. Several persons went round the ship with us, listening

with interest to our gallant commander's modest recital of his achievements.

Salcombe, though decidedly the hero of the day, did not take all the credit to himself. He had had a coadjutor, he said, who had assisted him most materially, and whose services he hoped would not be forgotten. A full account of the affair had already been forwarded to the Lords of the Admiralty, which he doubted not would procure for Mr. O'Malley a more gratifying proof of their recognition of his merits than it was in his power to bestow.

Salcombe looked round as he spoke, and I saw, with emotion which I could scarcely disguise, in the dark background of the gun-room where we were standing talking, the tall figure of Shane O'Malley. He was plainly dressed—not in uniform, nor in any kind of seamanlike attire, yet he had the unmistakable bearing of a British naval officer. Though I am certain he must have felt gratified at the warm and flattering mention of the assistance he had rendered, there was no answering smile, no proud flush called up by the praises bestowed upon him. His frank face wore sadness in its every line; that confirmed pallor which tells of disappointment too deep and bitter to be dispelled by any transitory emotion, had overspread

the countenance, which, when I saw him last, betrayed by its changing tints, as quickly as a girl's, the feelings of his soul. The flashing Irish eye, the bright, dark, mutable complexion, were dull and dim. The very darkness of despair had settled upon him.

He did not notice, nor, I think, recollect me, at first; and, when I spoke to him, he turned away hurriedly, as though memories too bitter for endurance were evoked by my aspect. I saw him pass his hand over his eyes, and stand as if robbed of strength for a moment, leaning against the wall. Then, he abruptly left the cabin.

Salcombe did not forget him when we went ashore, but sent his compliments to Mr. O'Malley by one of the seamen, with a particular request that he would accompany him. It was evident that Shane O'Malley's person was known, as well as his story, among the crowd on the wharves. His name was joined to Salcombe's, as the people cheered vociferously. If this had not been the case, old Matthew Brand's enthusiastic recognition would still have drawn attention upon him.

Matthew was standing, bareheaded, waiting for the man-of-war's boat, when we pulled up to the Queen's steps. Never was a monarch more reverentially received than

Shane by the man whose part he had once taken, to the grievous detriment of his own professional prospects, on one of the many occasions when oppression was practised on board the ship of which Harcourt was commander. Rough as he was, the old seaman's heart was in its right place, and I heard his cheer louder than any as we landed. I dare say young O'Malley had forgotten him. He scarcely seemed attending to the joyful confusion of sounds, but Matthew stood right in his path, cap in hand, and would not let him pass.

“Hurrah! One cheer more, boys, for the gentleman that wouldn't have overlooked me when he was one of our officers! Hurrah! for Lieutenant O'Malley, the sailors' friend! I was on board the same ship with him once, and I've never forgotten him, nor has one of those who sailed long ago in that floating prison, the Hogue. Cheer, till your throats burst, for Salcombe and O'Malley! and a groan for that black demon, Harcourt!”

The crowd very heartily seconded the motion, while O'Malley looked as if the public notice annoyed more than it gratified him. His heart was too sore for any pleasure to find admittance, but his goodnature prohibited his wounding the feelings of another. He stopped and shook hands with old

Matthew, to the great delight of the latter, in view of the crowd, and then, hurrying on, was lost to sight in the well-filled street.

“You recollect that fine young fellow, Frankland?” said Salcombe, looking after him as we walked along together. “I trust this lucky business will be the making of him. He is one of Harcourt’s victims, and lost his commission through his enmity, which he incurred by showing over-sensitiveness at the quantity of punishment in fashion on board his ship some years ago. I have very little doubt it will be restored to him, after the strong representation made in his favour by our good Admiral at the Cape. But hang me if I think he cares much about it! He’s regularly out of heart, soured, and dispirited, and, except when engaged on active duty, has no life or energy left. He came on board the *Alacrity* at the Cape, and asked me to rate him as a common seaman. Of course, he told me how his country had treated him, when he was in the same ship with Lieutenant Temple, who afterwards gave him employment in the coast-guard. I never understood him quite, in those days, and he does not like to allude to them. There was more rankling in his heart than the injury committed by those who robbed him of his rank in the navy; but he still loved his country,

and was willing to serve her, even in the humblest capacity.

“Those lights at Dunleary! Don't you recollect the provoking way in which they used to twinkle?” said Salcombe, suddenly, quite altering his tone. “Ah! I believe you knew more about them than you chose to tell me;—and Temple too. I have been in a rage two or three times, since, when I remembered the sleepless hours they cost me, and how puzzled I was to make out their connexion with the smuggling. O'Malley's countenance, when I happened to allude to them lately, betrayed the secret. I had some clue to it before, but could not conceive that a poor devil of a coast-guard man, as I thought him then, could be holding communication with the young lady at the Castle. When I learned from him his real name, and that he was a messmate of Lady Honoria's brother, I guessed the rest. I warned you to be on your guard. I hope you took the hint. Upon my word, I believe she used him infamously. Not that he told me so, but he shrinks from the mention of that family as if a sword went through him.”

“I am satisfied,” I said, “that both you and Mr. O'Malley will do Lady Honoria justice in time. It is rather his conduct which appears to me blameworthy. Why has he not come to England sooner? If his friends were

not more active and clear-sighted than himself, his present misery might, indeed, be of long continuance. What has he been doing these last four years?"

"Oh, at first he was carried off to America, and when some expectation, which he has never confided to me, was disappointed, he returned thither, after a brief visit to Ireland, and served as a volunteer in Mexico. If all the Yankees had been like that fine soldier and humane commander, General Scott, he would have stayed in the service, but his very soul sickened at the cruel punishments inflicted on the troops for the slightest dereliction from duty. Their gagging and bucking surpassed even the abominations in our treatment of those who are and should be considered as men; and the haughty distance between the United States' officers and their men prevented any kind of sympathy or hope of amelioration. He says the obstinate resistance they encountered in Mexico arose partly from the number of deserters from the American force, who knew, by dire experience, that they need expect no mercy. Shane distinguished himself so much, under galling fire, on the hill of Cerro Gordo, and at Contreras, on the day which decided the fate of the city of Montezuma, that many tempting offers were made to

him, but he declined them all, and embarked on board a ship bound to the Cape, determined to enter the first British man-of-war which would give him a berth. When he found what I had undertaken, he told me that he thought he could render me assistance; and most nobly did he redeem the pledge. He has studied the scientific branches of our profession more than was the fashion in my day, and was intimately acquainted with the improvements lately made in the machinery on board the *Diomed*. I scarcely think we should have got the old ship afloat without him."

We had turned off from the streets while we were conversing, and now stood upon the ramparts, which afford so pleasant a promenade for the townspeople of Portsmouth.

"There he is!" said Salcombe, pointing to a solitary figure of a man, standing by one of the port-holes, looking steadfastly seaward. "Alone, as usual, though no one is better liked by his companions. I wish to Heaven we had some good news to give him!"

"Leave the charge to me," I said; while, with that strange mixture of good and evil inseparable from our human nature, I felt, at the moment, as if I would most willingly have delegated to any one else the task of giving life and joy to the dispirited sailor. "I believe I

am the person to whom it of right belongs. Mr. O'Malley will be a different man the next time you see him."

Salcombe looked at me fixedly for an instant. "I am afraid you did not take my advice, Charles," he said, sympathisingly; guessing, with his usual quickness, the struggle I was undergoing. "Well, all I can say is, she is not half good enough for either of you. At least, I don't think so, and I see a world of misery in both your faces. Go straight ahead, old friend! and do what your noble heart dictates. It can't guide you wrongly. I heartily wish you a better and safer anchorage in stiller waters."

He turned away quickly, leaving me to meet young O'Malley, who, seeing that I recognised him, and evidently was seeking him, stood waiting, gravely and reluctantly, without again striving to avoid me.

The young Irishman had, as Salcombe truly said, an expression of deep suffering on his pale face, as he remained motionless, expecting my approach. My own momentary weakness passed off when I noticed, still more plainly than I had been able to perceive in the darkened ship's cabin, the blight that had fallen on that warm Irish nature. In person he was much more manly; several years seemed to have been added to his age, more

than the lapse of time could account for, and all the buoyancy of youth was gone. For the first time, I noticed a strong resemblance to his handsome mother.

With the simple courtesy which had always marked his bearing, he apologised in a few words for having quitted me so abruptly. He had not, he said, forgotten that I had shown him kindness formerly; but meeting unexpectedly with one whom he had seen in Ireland, just now when his return with Captain Salcombe had almost unmanned him, completed his overthrow. Many circumstances conspired to render his position, at the present moment, a peculiarly trying one.

All the time he was speaking, I was bewildering myself in vain with reflecting how best to acquaint him with the deception which had been practised upon him. "Are you aware," I said, "that all who love you have been plunged, by your own inconsiderate conduct, in overwhelming sorrow? I have very lately seen your father, who has long since changed his opinion, and sought anxiously to atone for the injustice from which you have suffered. Others, who never blamed, never doubted you, have for years endured on your account the most poignant grief."

Shane's cold demeanour remained unaltered.

"I do not know," he answered, bitterly, "one human being connected with me, except my poor father, who would shed a tear for me; and he, too, drove me from him. Will it be my old nurse—the peasant-woman in Mayo—that grieves for me? Tell her she's not forgotten, and never was, nor will be. I am glad she is still alive, and remembers me."

"She is well, and has received your bounty. But there is a love beyond even what dwells in the warm heart of your widowed foster-mother;—yes, greater, I am not afraid to say so, than that of your own parents. Young man, how have you repaid this trusting affection? Do you think it is a sufficient answer that, on any evidence,—even that of your own senses,—you were convinced that it had failed you? I tell you, No! Your eyes, your ears, even your own heart, might have deceived you, sooner than she could. It would be a right and fitting punishment for your credulity, to find that faithful heart broken by time and sorrow in your absence."

A bright glow mounted to Shane's face. His dark eyes flashed fire. "Am I dreaming?" he said, "or do you mean to tell me—surely, a man like you would not, on such a point, lead me astray—that Honoria has repented of having driven me from her?"

There's forgiveness in my heart for all her faults and cruelty, if she loves me. Oh, how wearily the time has passed without her! Let me die at her feet now!"

"There is no question of repentance on her part, or of forgiveness on yours," I said, impatiently. "Lady Honoria believes still that the salt wave which lashes the rock-bound coast of Antrim forms your sepulchre. Could not your gaze detect the difference between that lovely countenance, when the light of reason beamed from her eyes, and the inanimate statue, bereft for a time by severe affliction of memory and consciousness, which seemed to repulse you? Believe me, it will need great caution even now to break to her the tidings that you are still living."

Shane O'Malley's features flushed angrily as I spoke.

"Francis must answer to me for this! Oh, thou angel! how could I for a moment mistrust thee? Was it my own brother who was false enough to tell me that the woman I loved to madness despised and had forgotten me? Why am I here? Where is she, my wife? Where will I find her? Is the sea flowing between us still? You'll get leave for me, as you once did before, Mr. Frankland, when I wanted to go to my poor foster-mother. Shall I ever forget it? You'll explain to Captain

Salcombe that I couldn't wait to see him, not an instant. The Earl and Countess won't separate us now. Is she with them at Dunleary?"

"No," I said, pitying the impatience he could not restrain too much to keep him in suspense; "not many hours ago she stood by my side at The Cedars, watching, with eyes dimmed by tears, the Diomed come up Channel. Many recollections, all sad ones, were called up by that sight. She knew that it was Harcourt's ship, and the story of his desertion of her revived the memory of Adolphus's sufferings and yours. I cannot answer for the consequences if you rashly present yourself before her. Remember that she has long believed you to be dead. I warn you that there is great danger if you act precipitately."

"You may trust me, Mr. Frankland," said O'Malley, with emotion. "I'm not a boy now, as I was when we first loved each other. Even then, I was a man before my time, through suffering. Trust me, I'll not frighten her. But I can't brook delay; and Honor and I have gone through too much hardship in absence to be parted longer."

He shook hands with me warmly, not guessing the temptation it was to me to leave him to perform that journey alone. It was

more difficult than I had ever found it before to reason my feelings into subjection. Even though I esteemed it a positive duty to be on the spot, to break gradually to Lady Honoria the tidings that one whom she had long mourned as dead still lived, I felt it almost impossible to undergo such a trial.

The instant Shane had left me, I repented having suffered him to depart alone, and followed, intending to accompany him. When I reached the inn, however, Shane O'Malley had quitted it. He had left word that he could not resist his desire to set forward that evening on his journey, and had taken his place outside the fast night-coach through the forest, which was standing ready to start at the inn-door. Just as I turned away, after receiving this message, a servant in Mr. O'Malley's livery came up and spoke to me. His master and Lady Sarah, he said, had arrived an hour before at another hotel in the town, and wished much to see me. Lady Sarah had observed me pass the window at which she was sitting, and the man had been inquiring for me everywhere. It was too late to stop Shane, who was speeding over the country roads as fast as four horses could carry him; but I complied with the request of the servant sent in search of me, and accompanied him at once to the Fountain.

He told me, by the way, that his master and mistress had been staying for the last three weeks in London. An express from Mayo, bringing bad news, he believed, of Colonel O'Malley, had followed them down to Portsmouth, and they did not intend to remain more than an hour in the town.

CHAPTER XXII.

LADY SARAH O'MALLEY was sitting writing at a table near the window of the room in the hotel, to which I was immediately shown. When the door opened, she turned her face towards me with a quick, nervous movement; its pale, pure lines, so faultlessly chiselled, as to remain beautiful in spite of the decay of every youthful attraction, were perfectly bloodless. I had never seen any human being, not absolutely at the point of death, so spectral in aspect. The spasm—for the tension of the muscles was so great that the interruption made her whole frame quiver—passed off when she saw me, and she saluted me courteously, while she rapidly finished the letter with which she was occupied. Her hand, whiter and thinner than ever, did not shake; and I could perceive that the firm, fair characters of her somewhat old-fashioned Italian style of writing were delicately fine and legible.

I believe that both she and Mr. O'Malley

were glad, in that strange place, and at a moment of great sorrow and perplexity, to see one whom they were disposed to regard in the light of a friend. He seemed to be slowly reviving from an attack similar to the one he had undergone the last time I saw him in Ireland. Disappointment and deep grief were imprinted on his jaded features, and he lay reclining on a sofa, weak and inert, greatly fatigued by travelling, and scarcely able to give up the hope of greeting his long-lost son, which had nerved his languid frame, and second Lady Sarah's impatient desire to undertake another hurried journey. His anxiety to make further inquiries respecting Shane had taken him, immediately after I had quitted Mayo, to London, where the news of the rescue of the *Diomed* from her perilous position, with the gratifying particulars of the affair, officially made known by the authorities at the Cape to the Admiralty, had been communicated to him. Even the mother's heart was at last softened, and she readily consented to her husband's earnest wish that they should be on the spot to welcome Shane, as soon as possible after his arrival in England.

“But it was not to be, Mr. Frankland; you see it is of no use. It is Shane's fate to be ill-treated. I do not mean to blame any

one, but it was very painful to be delayed just now. Ill news—they always fly fast—retarded us. Lady Sarah has a mother's feelings for both her sons. I must refer you to her for explanation. You were one of our poor boy's best friends. Tell him that we were here; that I did my best to be at hand to receive him. Poor fellow! I would give a year of the remnant of life that is left me, to have shaken hands with him when his foot first touched English ground after his long exile, and to tell him how sorry I was that I did not do him justice sooner."

The old man sobbed aloud. His mind was so full of vexation at having missed the object of his journey to Portsmouth, that I think he hardly realised the intelligence which had been suddenly conveyed to him, of a dangerous accident having happened to his eldest son. Lady Sarah came towards us.

"Shane was our first object in coming here," she said, "but other duties have superseded that which we felt to be owing to him. He is on his way to happiness—the lot he has chosen for himself. He will not even think of us. It may have been our own fault. Perhaps, for our punishment, it is not granted to us to partake of his joy. Mr. Frankland will tell him that his father and I were here to welcome him;—that nothing was

wanting on our part to show our desire for an entire reconciliation."

"Aye, aye! anything will do for Shane! He is used to the second place," said his father, bitterly. "There! I've done—you had better listen to her ladyship. I only wish I could fight against grief as she does!"

Lady Sarah drew me on one side.

"Do you think that he is fit to undertake this journey?" she said, in a low tone. "That was one of the reasons for which I sent to ask you to advise us. You understand his constitution. What braces me, and gives me strength to go through any fatigue or suffering, prostrates his energies. When I reflect upon what a moment's delay may cost us, I can scarcely refrain from urging him to what may be too great a trial. I long to travel night and day,—to depart this instant. Will he be equal to accompanying me?"

Mr. O'Malley yielded like a child to my recommendation that he should, at all events, rest for an hour or two before setting out again. His physical exhaustion was so great that I doubted his ability to comply with his wife's wishes; but, as he seemed very unwilling to acquiesce in the suggestion that she should precede him, all our efforts were devoted to the task of building him up for the journey. Her manner softened inexpressibly when she

saw how much he was suffering, and she aided me in persuading him, as the best chance of recovering a little strength, to lie down on the bed in the adjoining room. Having seen him placed there as comfortably as circumstances would admit, I returned to the parlour to write down a prescription for the strong sedative medicine best adapted to allay the nervous irritability which prevented his obtaining the desired repose.

Lady Sarah O'Malley followed me in a few moments to the table at which I was writing, took the prescription from me, and, with her usual quiet promptitude, dispatched it at once. When she came back, she said, with an effort,—

“I am glad Mr. O'Malley is not here. His health is too much impaired to withstand these trials. I have scarcely power myself to tell you the dreadful misfortune which has befallen us. You will feel it also, for I know that Lord St. Lo was your early friend. When you were last at Dunleary, you must have seen that his mind was gone. More than once he has threatened to take the life of his young children by the present Lady St. Lo. It was against my will—in defiance of mine and his father's commands—that Francis was in that house; but we must not dwell upon that now. Still, I should not like you to imagine

that I think lightly of his misconduct. It has been the thorn that has rankled at my heart — none ever pierced so deep before. Francis, as you know, has been residing at Dunleary Castle. My information is very imperfect. I am not yet aware of the exact circumstances; whether he interposed rashly between the Earl and some other object of his wrath, or whether, from whatever cause, a quarrel took place between them; but the madman struck him with a sharp-pointed weapon said to have been concealed about his person. The blow, though inflicted by a hand that seemed so feeble, was a deep one, and must have been aimed with the fierce, momentary strength of insanity. There is, I am told, great danger for my son. Francis is not now at Dunleary. The only glimmering to me of brighter hopes is that, the moment he could be moved, he insisted upon being taken home. The express which reached us to-day was sent off by him after his arrival there. It is a fearful price to pay for freedom, but I trust this unseemly friendship is for ever broken through.”

For the first time, the blood rushed to that pale, haughty face, and she turned away, as if conscious of such painful embarrassment that she could not bear that any mortal eyes should witness its external indication. For myself, I was inexpressibly shocked. Many feelings were at war within me. Sympathy

with the afflicted mother, struggling with her pride and grief, was very strong, and sorrow that one who, in earlier life, had been so kind and generous as Lord St. Lo, should, under the mastery of frantic passion, have committed so terrible an action.

When Lady Sarah returned to the table at which I was still seated, deep in thought, after I had in a few words expressed my grief, her eyes were full of tears.

“I will try to follow your advice. Once for all, I thank you for your kindness to Mr. O'Malley and poor Shane. I am not, perhaps, as hard as you think me; but one, at least, in every family, must have nerve to act. Tell the poor boy he is quite forgiven, and that I trust we may all meet in happiness at some future time. At present, my suffering child claims all my care. Shane is happy. Francis suffers in mind and body. There cannot be a question, now, which needs a mother's love most. Now, go quickly and administer the medicine to Mr. O'Malley; — or let me do it; — he likes it best, I think, from my hand. He will rally, I hope, presently. His feelings are acute, but a little rest, a little soothing, allays them. I should not like to leave him, and yet I must start to-night. I should never know peace of mind again, if there were one instant's unnecessary delay.”

The next minute she was standing by her

husband's bed, with her usual quick but soft movements, raising his pillows, and holding to his lips the draught which she trusted would invigorate his feeble system. Oh, how hard it was for that energetic, impatient woman, who at any moment of emergency could say to her own quivering pulses, Peace, be still! — and who ruled her agitated nerves, even now, with a rod of iron, to bear with the querulous invalid, to soothe his uneasiness, and impart an air of quietude to the temporary abode she so earnestly longed to quit! Yet this was done, and the hotel bedroom made almost as quiet as his own house on the shores of the Irish lake, with the blue chain of the Nephin mountains ascending into the pure sky, had been when I saw him lying there, in danger of his life. How often must Lady Sarah's thoughts have travelled thither, to the couch of her idolised son, I could well imagine, as I sat in the outer room, and read the letter she put into my hand, which had so greatly alarmed her. It was written by the old steward, who had first mentioned Mr. O'Malley's sons to me, and related that the Colonel had been brought home, by slow stages, in a grievous state of weakness, from Dunleary Castle; Lord St. Lo, in an access of sudden frenzy, having thrown himself upon his guest, with a knife which he had secreted

about him ; and having been only prevented by instant and prompt intervention from murdering him on the spot. The wound was in the chest, and was very severe ; so much so as to render travelling before it was healed a great imprudence ; but the Colonel had been peremptory in his desire to be taken home, and it was by his order that an express was sent off to his mother, begging her to come and nurse him.

Lady Sarah rejoined me just after I had finished reading the old steward's letter, which did not terminate, hurriedly as it had been written, without a fervent hope, on the part of the writer, that Master Shane had come back safe to England. Mr. O'Malley was sleeping, his wife told me, and his countenance had assumed a much more placid expression. With the utmost speed, and, at the same time, perfect quietness, she made the few preparations necessary for their departure, ordering such light refreshments for the invalid as I thought would be advisable. If, after all, he were unable to proceed with her, she had come to the resolution to set forth alone ; but I hoped that an interval of unbroken repose, such as he seemed likely to obtain, would sufficiently invigorate him for me to sanction his accompanying her.

Mr. O'Malley woke from the sound slum-

ber into which he had fallen, just as I perceived, from Lady Sarah's expressive countenance, and her frequent glances at the watch laid on the table, that the hour appointed for their leaving the town had passed by, and that her patience was beginning to fail her. No one would have supposed, however, from watching her studied tranquillity, the absence of any hurrying look or word, and the perfect calmness of her tone and manner, how wildly the mother's anxious heart was beating within her, while she assisted her husband to rise and dress, and coaxed him into partaking of some of the refreshment provided with much care and neatness for him. Mr. O'Malley, who was greatly revived, seemed by far the most impatient to set out.

“Poor fellow!—poor Francis! we must not neglect him. Had we not better order the carriage to the door, and see that everything is ready? Servants are not to be trusted. Not that Lady Sarah leaves much for any one but herself to do. Very energetic woman—especially where Colonel O'Malley's comfort is concerned. Quite right, too, just now. Ah! I believe she is always right; except on one point, and there she has given way at last. Our boy Shane! I should like you to see in what terms the Secretary of the First Lord writes about him. His mother

has the letter, I dare say, but we won't disturb her just now. You'll tell Shane how much his old father wished to see him; but, you know, a lady cannot travel such a distance alone. I must escort his mother. Shane knows I always treat her with respect. Such a woman deserves it. Look at her step and air—she might have been a princess! You know the old story—she is worthy of a throne. I cannot take too much care of her. Now, Lady Sarah, shall I speak to the waiter? What, you have done it? Ready, love—yes, I'm ready. Is the carriage come round? Let me help you on with your cloak. You know I always do it better than any one. Mind you do not forget the message to Shane, Mr. Frankland. He must bring his handsome wife to Ireland. Beauty goes a long way there. Lady Sarah authorises me to say she will receive her as a mother; and let me tell you, however beautiful my son's wife may be, he'll not easily prove to me that she is a finer woman than mine was when I took her to Mayo."

I could not help admiring the courtly air with which the old Irish gentleman, himself so feeble, arranged his wife's cloak as he fancied she liked it, and then handed her punctiliously to the carriage, in the same way that he had done invariably, I am sure,

every time during their married life that they went out together. A faint smile was on the lips of the faded beauty when she bade me farewell, and perhaps caught some of her husband's parting words to me; but the last glimpse I had of their faces through the carriage-window showed me Lady Sarah's looking the most worn and anxious of the two. Her hand trembled as she drew up the glasses, and the necessity for immediate exertion being over, I saw her lean back against the cushions pale and exhausted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

I SHALL not attempt to decide whether I acted rightly in yielding to Salcombe's persuasions, and not following Shane O'Malley to Moraston. Now, when regret is sobered by time, I shudder at the risk we ran; but, at that moment, I could not face the reality I had myself earnestly laboured to bring about. Lady Honoria, in her state of sorrowful bereavement, had been to me so absorbing an object of interest, that I had seriously longed at any price to restore her tranquillity. Perhaps, I did not duly estimate the full amount of bewildering joy accruing to others from circumstances which, for a very long period, robbed my own existence of its brightness.

While life lasts, I can never forget Salcombe's cordial friendship, and his wife's delicate consideration for my comfort. Once again, they made me at home in their dwelling, and I had an excellent opportunity of judging whether the children or the parrot made most noise; for Polly had been the

gallant commander's faithful companion in his wanderings, and, as in the case of the sound of the sea-waves, Mrs. Salcombe had reconciled herself to the bird. The little boys made an extraordinary pet of her; and what with the screaming, scratching, biting, laughter, and hurraing that went on, the house was certainly a nuisance to a well-ordered neighbourhood; but there was such a genuine element of happiness in that noisy mirth, that I felt the better for joining in it, and Salcombe was the greatest boy of the three. His wife was the only quiet one of the party, yet there might be seen much placid enjoyment in her manner. She most thoroughly participated in the gratification her husband received from the society and congratulations of his friends. Their prospects were quite altered, and he was expecting a fresh appointment to a better ship than the old *Alacrity*, after his present brief, prosperous holiday.

He entered with his customary zeal into the cause of the child whose rights I was eager to establish, and who, we both entertained not the least doubt, would prove to be the son of Damian, Lord Dunleary.

It is not necessary to recapitulate here all that he told me of his voyage in the *Mayflower*, with the Earl and Countess St. Lo, since it was only a fuller relation of the particulars

already given me by his wife ; but every date and locality agreed with the information which had been previously obtained, and very few links seemed wanting in the chain of evidence, tending to identify the child carried on board Colonel O'Malley's yacht in the Tagus, with the one taken away shortly after its mother's death, in the same year and month, from Kate's lodgings at Cintra.

With reference to this last circumstance, we had the testimony of Matthew Brand, who, when summoned to meet us in London on this business, repeated the narrative of his search after his unhappy niece, in terms which greatly perplexed the learned counsel who had taken the case in hand. Lord St. Lo's unfortunate state of health threw many difficulties in our way ; but proper measures were adopted to protect the child's person, and for procuring the necessary legal evidence from his birth-place in Portugal.

Matthew Brand was satisfied to rely entirely upon Salcombe and myself, and manifested no desire whatever to interfere with our proceedings.

“ When the ship has got a good pilot on board, always leave him alone ! ” — he said, after we left the lawyer's chambers. “ Don't be putting in a word, as some people do, asking if he isn't hugging the land too close, or keeping too

wide an offing. That never answers. Let him have just the sea-room he likes for the ship to roll about in, and his pipe or quid of tobacco,—grog won't hurt him, seeing he's out in all weathers,—and he won't take too much of it, when he knows what a responsibility is upon him. My father couldn't leave a lawyer to do his own work, but made a will for himself at the last—more harm than good! If these gentry understand their business,—(and why shouldn't they?—there's not much look-out to disturb them!—their windows are an inch thick with dust, and a fog you might cut with a knife outside them,)—Kate's child will be righted without my interference. A man can't live nigh sixty years in the world, and sail in all waters, without learning something. Even the women-folk, we get to see through them at last, with their tantrums and nonsense. I've not spent twelve years with my old mother—to say nothing of the widow and poor Kate—without having to shift sail, aye, and lower it too, or put a reef in my canvas, when it blows great guns at sea. There's nothing else I can compare them to, when they set to work crying and laughing in a minute, except a thunderstorm such as we had many a night in the tropics. It's no disrespect to the young lady at The Cedars, Master Charles, to say, womankind is womankind all the world

over; and though, if you had had your choice, you and the Lieutenant, it wasn't the old seaman on *The Knowle* that you'd have sent for to take the weathergage of what she was likely to bear. I reckon neither of you understands her better."

He gave a low chuckle as he saw me look quite as much surprised as he expected, and then went on, after his quaint fashion,—

"I didn't think to stop longer at Portsmouth than to see the ship come into harbour, and give a cheer for the Lieutenant and Captain Salcombe. Just as I shouldered my bundle, and thought to get home to the old missus, with perhaps the good luck of a lift on the road, the coach hove in sight, and who should I see on the top but Lieutenant O'Malley? He, seeing I was a traveller, offered me a free passage—just like him!—and in two minutes we were whirling along the road, just as muddy now as it used to be dusty. I was glad to be spared the walk. "When I found the young gentleman was bound to our part of the coast, I made bold to offer to sling up a hammock for him at the old house. There's plenty of room now at *The Knowle*—the more's the pity. He might like the pleasant views, and to see the dame's cows and sheep feeding, after so much sailing on salt-water. He didn't answer quite like himself,

at first, and we bowled along, mile after mile, with the road growing darker before us, till we crossed the bridge at Moraston, and saw the lights at the Hall, high up in the Lady's room,—or, perhaps, though I didn't know it was so then, my little grand-nephew's nursery,—right away across the river.

“Well, I saw he was downhearted still above a bit, after we got home, though mother, as soon as I had spoken a word to her, couldn't do enough to honour him; so I sent the old lass off to bed, and fell to talking about old times to cheer him up a little; and I mentioned poor young Adolphus St. Lo, and our picking up a bit of the Hogue's boat on the beach, and what a store his sister would have set by it, if we could but have found it for her. When I named the young lady, his face changed, and I saw that he liked to hear about her; so I went on with my yarn, and said how she cried when she watched the Diomed come up Channel.

“That opened his heart, and he told me all his troubles, and that he didn't know how to break to his lady-wife the news that he was not drowned. It was a'most too much for a rough old fellow like me, but I thought in the morning I'd find a way to break it to her.

“I believe the Lieutenant kept all the watches that night, and he was up before gun-

fire. The old dame herself wasn't brisker. I didn't hinder him, you may be sure, and we were right away across the hills and the Earl's park, before the morning was much older.

"I couldn't find a better place to leave him in than the Earl's Drawing-room. When a man's uneasy in his mind, specially an officer, he likes to have room on the deck to walk about, and there's a good space to turn in under the old cedar-trees. When I got to the house, I asked to see the Lady—she's a real one, and no mistake, and ordered me to be shown in at once to the breakfast-room, where she was sitting with the little boy at her feet, like the Catholic pictures in the churches abroad, of Mary and her little son.

" 'Have you brought me a message from Mr. Frankland?' she said, quite cheerfully, after bidding me sit down. 'I know you went with him to see Captain Salcombe's ship come in. I hope you left him well.'

" 'Aye, aye, ma'am!' I said, troubled to see her so quiet, and not knowing what to do for want of my papers, for every word I thought to say was gone clear out of my mind. 'It was not exactly Mr. Frankland that sent me—I'm sailing under other orders to-day—but a friend of his, a gentleman that came home in the Diomed, and says he once sailed with your poor young brother. Perhaps you might like

to see him. He was a ship-mate of mine, and a kind friend to me, once ; and he 's doing me the favour of stopping a night or two at our place on 'The Knowle.'

"She turned very white, and I was afraid she'd go off like the widow ; but she did not cry, only said, softly,—

" 'Any friend of poor Adolphus,—then stopped for a minute—' What is the gentleman's name ?'

"I was quite in a fix, then, for it wasn't set down in my books whether it was best to give that out at once.

" 'Perhaps you mightn't recollect it, he says, ma'am, but he could tell you many stories about young Mr. St. Lo, that you'd like to hear ; and he thinks he knew you too, once, in Ireland.

"She got paler than ever, then, and put her hand to her heart. The little fellow at her knee got up, as brave as a lion, and came right at me, as if he thought I wanted to hurt her ; but she motioned him to go back again ; silently, however. She's not one of the fast-talkers, and I don't think she *could* speak.

" 'The sea is a wide place,' I went on, trying to warp round to the moorings I wanted to occupy. 'Sometimes folks get lost upon it, and then, after a time, come

back. Suppose, now, there should be a foreign vessel near, when a boat capsized, such as the poor young gentleman, your brother, commanded, and she were to pick up some of the crew. I don't say it was so in that case; we know it wasn't; but think of another that might be like it. Well, that ship is going foreign, and short of hands; the captain likes to nab English sailors to teach his lubberly crew their duty, and sails half round the world before he'll set them ashore again. A man cannot walk on the sea—he must bide by the ship; and then, by the time he manages to work his way back to England, what changes may occur? His wife may believe him drowned,—may be married again,—mayn't choose to own him. There's no end to the strange things I've heard tell of in such cases.'

"I don't know what I should have said next, for she turned as many colours as the fish that are thrown out of the creels upon the beach; when Mrs. Margaret Frankland came in, and she noticed directly something was amiss. I've seen it in my mother and the widow—there's nothing like women for kindness, at such times as the weather's foul, and the crew's spirits sinking. That's when their courage rises, and they've sense to recollect their prayers, which most of us men

have forgotten. Anyhow, they help each other.

“When she came to herself a little bit, still clinging to the old lady as if she had been her mother, the young lady said,—

“‘I am afraid I am very weak, and cannot see my brother’s friend to-day. I scarcely think I can know him. When will Mr. Frankland be back?’

“‘Can’t say exactly, my lady. But he knows the gentleman, and came ashore from the *Diomed* with him yesterday. He would have brought him here if he could have been persuaded to wait. When a man has waited, it may be years, and not caught sight of his family, it’s harder than I can say, after he comes ashore from a long voyage, to bid him spend another day without their company. I think you’d best see him at once. He’s but at a short distance.’

“‘It seems to me this man has reason on his side, my dear,’ said the old lady, and I never wish to hear one of her age speak more sensibly. ‘Suspense is very hard to bear. I have heard something about this matter from my nephew. I think you would be sorry to grieve Adolphus’s friend.’

The poor lady, all in a tremble, made a sign to me that I might go, and, half way between the house and the cedars, I met

the Lieutenant, who was tired, I'll be bound, of his morning's watch. I gave him the word, but I didn't go back with him, for I thought they'd manage it best without me; and so, I suppose, it proved, for while I was walking about, not over and above easy in my mind as to whether the tackle I'd let down mightn't get entangled, Mrs. Margery came out all smiles and good-humour. It was very plain the wind had set in fair in the quarter she came from.

“I can't exactly say how they contrived it among them; but the young lady looked very happy, the next Sunday, when I saw her in her place in the Earl's pew in church, with her husband by her side. He'd been over to see me, before that, and told me he'd never forget the obligation I'd laid him under; though I don't rightly know what it was, for I never was so near cutting myself adrift. I was barely holding on, with what tackle I had left in a mess, when the old lady came in and got me off. Lady Honoria didn't pass me by in the churchyard without speaking, and the little fellow ran up and put his hand in mine, and said he didn't want to fight me, for he liked Mr. O'Malley very much, and wanted him to stop at The Cedars. The young lady blushed like a rose, and the Lieutenant, Heaven bless him! shook hands with

me, and said, when she was strong enough they'd come up to 'The Knowle together, to thank my old dame for the warm welcome she had given him, and the comfortable quarters he got there, the first night he slept in England."

CHAPTER XXIV.

WHILE I was detained in town by the legal proceedings which were necessary to establish that the little boy residing with Lady Honoria at The Cedars was the son of Damian, Lord Dunleary, mentioned in his dying wife's letter, and heir-apparent to the earldom, I more than once visited Lord St. Lo, who had been brought to London. Since his murderous attack upon Colonel O'Malley he was kept under strict surveillance. It had been found necessary to separate him from the Countess and her young children, and I was cautioned not to name them in his presence.

Reports very unfavourable to Lady St. Lo's reputation were current in the neighbourhood of Dunleary. It was said that she and Colonel O'Malley had exercised very barbarous severity in their treatment of her husband, and that his already-enfeebled mind had given way entirely under this painful pressure. Weak in principle and intellect as for many years he had been, he was made their tool; and the

deliberate conspiracy to deprive the children by his first marriage of their rights, in which he had been led unwillingly to join, subjected him to all the agonies of remorse, and rendered the artful couple who had pressed such a part upon him the objects of his bitterest hatred.

When I saw him in London, there was a very marked change in his appearance. All that I remembered as being pleasant and genial in the expression of his features was gone. That open look, which had survived the lightheartedness of youth, had given place to the air of crafty caution which, in persons of unsound mind, is an evidence of the suspicion engendered by a sense of personal restraint. Though he never alluded to it, I could see plainly that he was aware of, and longed to escape from, the confinement in which he was kept.

“ I dare say I shall find myself better when I am in your hands, Dr. Frankland. I have the very highest opinion of your system. The sooner I can dispatch the business which brought me to London, and run down to Moraston, the better. Country air beats all doctors. Is the place kept up properly? You used to be a sportsman. I hope you carry a gun sometimes, and that my people obey my directions and afford you what amusement, in the absence of its master, the

place can supply. Flowers and fruit ! Ah, I remember how Mrs. Frankland enjoyed them ! We used to be good neighbours. I shall never forget what care you took of them both, poor souls !—my wife and yours. I have led a wandering, unsatisfactory life since then, and now the thing I require most is quiet. When you go home, will you desire the people at The Cedars to expect me ? Any day I may be down there ; and I shall remain some time ; but I shall not see company, only your family, Mr. Frankland,—any member of your family will be welcome ; and the little boy, Damian's son. He is all I have to care for. Let him stop at The Cedars. Dunleary is too cold for him. Those blasts from the North Sea are like death. I hate the place, and never mean to set foot there again. The racket of Lady St. Lo's gay parties would drive me distracted. She likes it :—there cannot be too much dissipation to please her. At Homburg and Baden-Baden, few men played higher. I have seen piles of gold melt away before her at a sitting. Let her have a proper allowance and live at Dunleary ; but don't let the little boy visit her ! If Lady St. Lo once lays a finger upon him, he is lost, body and soul ! See how they are all gone—Damian, Honoria, Adolphus ! I don't want to hear about the rest. Let them stay with her. Children of their tender age are best with their mother."

On one subject the Earl's impressions were remarkably clear and accurate, and assisted us materially in obtaining corroboratory evidence of his son's marriage, and the adoption of Damian's child as her own by the Countess St. Lo. No sense of shame, no recollection of past tenderness, palsied her husband's tongue, as he eagerly cited the facts of the case. It was not difficult to verify his assertions, now that Salcombe was in England, and measures had been taken to bring over witnesses from Portugal; but it was mainly owing to the Earl's revelations of the plot, devised and executed by his wife, that justice was eventually done.

Colonel O'Malley's family had not courted publicity by instituting any legal inquiry respecting the accident which had endangered his life. He was still a great sufferer, and I heard from Lady Sarah, soon after her return to Mayo, that violent inflammation had ensued after his journey home. The wound, which in itself was very severe, had been still further irritated by travelling, and though the worst symptoms were now mitigated, yet constant fever had wasted his strength to such a degree, that it seemed doubtful whether his health would ever be re-established. As soon as he was able to bear the change, removal to a mild climate was

prescribed, and, wherever he was ordered to go, his mother meant to accompany him. It was a subject for thankfulness that Mr. O'Malley had another son, capable, in a great measure, of supplying her place in ministering to his comfort. Lady Sarah trusted that Shane and his wife would speedily obey the summons she had dispatched, and be at hand to soften her husband's regret, when, for the first time during thirty years, she should be forced to leave him.

When I found, from a letter bearing nearly the same date, written to me by Lady Honoria, that she and her husband were on the point of complying with this request, and about to leave Moraston, I set aside all the business with which I had been, or fancied myself, engaged, and went down to take leave of them. My own feelings had settled into composure. I no longer thought of her in the romantic light in which she had appeared, when she depended upon me for much of the comfort of which her desolate life would admit. I knew that I should see her as I had never yet done, excepting, perhaps, for one brief moment, in the Fishing Lodge on the Island, when I had to break down her glad spirits by the intelligence of her brother's death. There had been more danger to my peace, more reason for avoiding her society,

throughout all the years during which I had been called upon to act for her in place of the brothers she had lost, than now, when I should behold in her the happy, loved, and loving wife of one whom I was ready, without one shade of jealousy, to admit to be truly worthy of her.

The Earl's Drawing-room, with its dark, but never-fading, canopy of verdure, had, I suspect, been a favourite spot with Shane since the day when he paced it to and fro, impatiently waiting for the summons to his wife's presence. At all events, I found them both there, the first time that I went up to The Cedars after my return to Moraston. Lady Honoria came forward to meet me, and, though she blushed and hesitated, there was no obstruction, after the earliest moment of embarrassment, to her kind words of welcome. Certainly, joy requires less preparation than grief. Her clear, sweet voice, the soft, warm glow upon her cheek, showed that Shane had been right in telling me that I might trust her with him.

"You are only just in time, Mr. Frankland. Honor and I leave Moraston to-morrow," he said, after our first greeting was over. "My mother has written to say that Francis cannot bear the late change of temperature. This easterly wind, which we scarce feel under

the shelter of The Cedars, cuts like a sword across the Mayo bogs. My poor brother was worse last week, and they are gone to Madeira. We shall be sorry to leave this place, but my father needs us sadly."

Flickering through the interstices of the thick cedar-boughs, came and went, as he spoke, the rays of the spring sunshine; and even so there passed over the sweet, fair face turned towards him alternate gleams and shadows, such as cross the brightest joys of earth. I heard Honoria sigh, but the next moment she spoke to me cheerfully.

"Ireland is my country—I like it best, though we have been very happy here. Oh, Charles! I was so afraid that you would not come, and that I should not be able to thank you for all you have done for me and for poor Damian's child. Shane and I will never forget it. See, he has got the old man with him, the darling! and Duncan Geddes. How they both love him! I'm ever happiest when he is in their company, or yours—his poor mother's friends. I think he feels it already."

While she spoke, Adolphus caught sight of me, and ran towards us. Duncan Geddes and Matthew kept respectfully in the background.

"I'm not to go with them, Mr. Frankland!" he cried, joyfully. "Honor gave me my choice, and I said I would rather stop at

The Cedars ; and she told me I might, if you came home in time, and promised to take care of me. Won't you do it ?”

A very solemn feeling came over me as I stooped to kiss the little fellow to whom I was appointed, by Lady Honoria's express desire, one of the three personal guardians.

“I fancy he may be best at The Cedars,” she said, simply, “now that you will be able to watch over him. We must travel quickly, and it mightn't suit Adolphus. Mr. O'Malley is not much used to children, and would, perhaps, not like to be troubled with him just now. He has plenty to amuse him here, and kind friends all round the neighbourhood. What were you doing with Mr. Brand and the forester ?”

“Duncan is going to teach me to shoot,” the little fellow answered, joyfully. “He has made me a bow and arrows, and he and Matthew are going to set up a mark for me to hit. I am sure I shall do it. Won't you stop and look at me ?”

His will was still law to Honoria, and she stood patiently watching his persevering efforts. At first, utter failure—then very wide of the mark—but still he persisted, and manifestly improved.

When we walked nearer to him, his com-

panions cordially welcomed me back, each in his own manly, independent fashion. They had been staunch friends of late, and the little boy was an equal favourite with both, but the seaman never treated him with familiarity. Though he would have laid down his life for his little kinsman, no one could for a moment have supposed, from his manner, how near a connexion existed between them.

“My old dame is as fond of him as I am,” he said to me, in an undertone, as we stood a little apart. “You wouldn’t know her. She’s new rigged, fore and aft, and looks as jolly an old craft as ever hoisted her colours on the King’s birthday. As for The Knowle, it’s a different place, and we’re both ready to fire a broadside when the young master, Heaven bless him! trots about among the apple-trees. But we don’t want to make any disturbance. Always keep up a proper distinction between the officers and the crew! He’s Lord St. Lo’s grandson, as well as Hezekiah Brand’s; and Kate, when she sailed out of harbour under false colours, left her own name and friends for ever behind her. We won’t cast it upon her innocent child, that she wasn’t born to the station the young lord thought fit to exalt her to. What am I, but a rough old sea-dog, that’s had a spice of the

sun in the tropics, and the cold at the North Cape, till I'm burnt and frozen as many colours as the flags of all nations? There's red and blue, and precious little white left, except about the scalp, but that'll do for old England. And he!—look at his hands and his face, like a lily!—I wish there was a little more blood in it, but that'll come when he's a bit older and stronger. He belongs to The Cedars, and they to him, and I'd rather take a berth on board ship, and work my way out as a penny-a-month man—which many a true-born British tar does, when he wants to emigrate—than stand in his way like an old man-of-war's hulk, sunk to keep out the enemy's ships from the mouth of a harbour."

"There's mair wisdom than you give him credit for in the auld carle's words," said the forester, joining me, and speaking in his wonted deep, earnest tones, while Matthew hurried away to pick up the little boy's arrows. "Aye, and love, too, for the puir lass that's now in heaven—at least, I trust so, for there's balm in the first tears a woman sheds over her babe for worse faults than hers. I'm right glad she was not so light-minded as to bring shame upon her parents' grey hairs and all her kindred; but the less they say about her the better. When a maiden marries she becomes her husband's

equal, and ranks with him before God and man; but she can't raise her people along with her. She must look well before she forsakes them, as Kate did; for, once put your hand to the plough, it may not be drawn back. Think how it fared with Lot's wife, who, when her heart failed her, looked back, and became a pillar of salt in the land, instead of going to the stranger's country with her husband! It's well for the bairn that the old man sees it in the right light, and won't trouble him for more than he can give. There's no law that forbids respect to grey hairs, and the child loves him. He's as happy on the bonnie green knowes, and among the old dame's hencoops, as the son of a king; and he might be a prince by the way they treat him. 'That is best for all parties.'

He turned short off and went back to his little favourite, who was making considerable progress in aiming at the mark, which was set up at only a few yards' distance. Duncan moved it a little farther off, and encouraged his efforts.

"He'll never leave off till he hits it," he said, turning towards us. "'There's a spirit in that bairn which will carry him, with the Lord's help, through fire and water; aye, and they shall not harm him. He's never tired of striving. They that run in the race

run all, yet the prize falleth to one. The steadfast spirit taketh the city."

Lady Honoria's eyes filled with tears. Surrounded as she was with blessings, she was thinking sorrowfully at that moment of her brothers—Adolphus, clever but impatient; Damian, indolent, unstable as water. The excellence which the keen eyes of the forester traced already in the heir of her house—that steady, persevering, patient temper, which carried him successfully through his childish pursuits and tasks—would it secure for him a more prosperous career than theirs?

"You'll teach him, Charles," she said, gently. "Damian and Adolphus had no training. Tell him what that good man, your father, told you, and he'll not forget it. There's more steadiness in him now, child as he is, than they had when they were twice his age. It must be that he was baptized in sorrow. Poor Kate's tears had a blessing in them. Don't let him be proud and haughty, but loving and gentle to all earth's creatures! There's trouble enough in life to keep us down and make us lowly, if we would but mind its lessons."

The Cedars was a different place the next day, and it has, generally speaking, been very lonely since. There have been times when the solitude has been so intolerable to me, that

I have given up my home-duties, and taken a cruise with Salcombe or Fairfax, who, next to him, is still my most intimate friend. The last voyage I made was with the latter. We sailed the seas together more than once, before he, too, formed nearer ties, and settled at Oakenshaw; while Mrs. Fairfax, greatly to her own satisfaction, effected, in spite of all opposition, the removal she had so long contemplated to the Dower-house, farther down the river.

While I was away from Moraston, Adolphus St. Lo was under the care of his aunt, who resides principally in Ireland; Colonel O'Malley and Lady Sarah continuing absent, and Mr. O'Malley, unable to endure the separation from his wife, having joined them in the south of France. It is said to be unlikely that Colonel O'Malley will ever entirely recover his health; but, in a mild climate, aided by his mother's devoted care, his life may be indefinitely prolonged.

At present, I have no intention of leaving home again. My time is fully occupied, and, were I to quit my place, I feel that I should be sorely missed. Duty chains me to it, and pleasures spring up where I least expect them. A very great interest exists for me in everything relating to my young charge, the boyish proprietor of The Cedars. Adol-

phus is like a young brother—almost a son—to me ; and I think he shows signs of qualities which will justify the sanguine expectations I confess I have formed for him.

I will not say that I am never haunted by recollections of the past, but they do not torture me as much as formerly, and I like the freedom in which I live. They start up sometimes, from the gloomy depths of the thickets in the park : they mock me in the glinting of the April sunshine on the gnarled trunks of the cedars, or the red glow of the deep heaven-reflecting waters of the smooth, silent pools ; in the noisy rivulet into which I still cast a line with Duncan Geddes, or on the broomy heights of The Knowle, whither Adolphus and I often ride together. But who that lives much alone, as I do, is not haunted by fancies ? Well for us if they lead to nothing worse than bringing before me, as the moonlight shines through the high casement-panes, the form of the fair creature once restlessly pacing to and fro in her agony, or crouching on the window-ledge. But it is oftenest in solitude that such thoughts come upon me, and I never indulge in them long. Life, as I view it, has too many claims upon our best exertions to be wasted in dreams. Such visions, when they come across me, are looked at steadily, and vanish.

The old Earl has slumbered in the family vault at Moraston for more than two years. He did not exhibit any fresh tendency to violence, but it was deemed advisable to keep him in strict confinement. Several times I went up to town to see him, and he always received me courteously, and with apparent pleasure. His inquiries after Adolphus were very minute, but he never mentioned Honoria or any other member of his family. Even when his daughter visited him, he did not recognise her. Before his death, I was enabled to be of service to him, by suggesting a change of treatment, from which he derived much benefit. His manner, then, was quite calm and collected, and he expressed a desire to be buried beside his first wife, the Countess who died at Moraston. This, his last desire, was, of course, complied with, and the Earldom of St. Lo, with the property which surrounded our village, became the inheritance of Adolphus. The Irish estates will be clear of all encumbrances at the end of his minority, beyond the very moderate settlement made on the late Earl's widow and children, who reside at Dunleary.

It is a great grief to Lady Honoria that Adolphus manifests the same unconquerable love for the salt-water which was shown by his uncle, poor young St. Lo, and her own

husband. He vows that nothing shall prevent his going to sea with Captain O'Malley, who has greatly distinguished himself in his profession, since his commission was restored to him; and, I am afraid, Matthew Brand encourages his grand-nephew's nautical propensities.

I am inclined to think there is no such school as the British navy for a youth of spirit. It will do Adolphus St. Lo no harm to follow his steadfast predilection, and I believe that it would be next to impossible to turn him from it. All our captains, thank Heaven! are not Harcourts, nor are our noble vessels floating prisons. God's providence is over sea and land, and dangers and temptations beset one gifted with rank and fortune as much or more in the flowery paths of society, as where the blast whistles through the shrouds, and the guns are pointed at England's foes.

Let him go, Honoria!—there is time for many a brave deed yet, such as on each of these stirring days are performed by our intrepid heroes, before he can settle for life, as I have done, under the cedars of Moraston.

THE END.

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